Hard bargains: a study of inter-agency collaboration in the provision of day care.

Thesis

"HARD BARGAINS:
A STUDY OF INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION
IN THE PROVISION OF DAY CARE."

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This case study of a day care project has relevance for the development of policy and practice in work with the under fives. The policy interest lies in the collaboration between statutory and voluntary sectors in establishing the project. The practical interest lies in the examination of an initiative in day care. The two themes of inter-agency collaboration and innovation in day care are juxtaposed throughout the thesis. A major concern was to explore how grand designs for inter-agency collaboration are realised in practice. Some general propositions about inter-organisational behaviour are examined. The findings offer little support to the hypothesis that specific conditions - shared goals, complementary resources and efficient mechanisms for controlling exchanges - are necessary for successful collaboration. The case study suggests less stringent conditions. The commitment of key members of the organisations assumes greater importance.

The case study project was one amongst a number of community "experiments" in care for under fives undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. During its first year, the project was found to be dominated by professional (rather than community) ideals; choices about how long children would spend at the project and how they would spend their time there were dictated largely by project staff; the choices available to project staff were limited by the rulings of the Manpower Services Commission as the main funding body; the stated ideal of creating a home from home was found to be inappropriate.

Some areas for further research are suggested. These are, first, more, detailed studies of the implications of agency collaboration for service delivery; secondly, more studies of Manpower Services Commission

involvement in the funding of welfare provision; and, thirdly, more comparative studies investigating the early stages of setting up short term community and social work projects.

CHAPTER 1

"ONE SMALL DAY CARE PROJECT"

This is a detailed case study of a small day care project for the under fives. The project was established in a northern new town by a national charity (here called Charity X) and the local authority (here called Bedeburgh). The case study has relevance for the development both of policy and practice in work with the under fives. The policy interest lies in the collaboration between the statutory and voluntary sectors in setting up the project. The practical interest lies in the examination of an experimental initiative in day care for the under fives.

The two themes, of inter-agency collaboration and innovation in day care practice, are juxtaposed throughout the thesis. A major objective of the study was to explore how grand designs for inter-agency collaboration are realised in practice. There are two distinct concerns for those involved in any inter-agency initiative. One is to maintain a working relationship with members of the other agency. The second is to ensure that any mutually agreed objective, in this case setting up a day care facility, is achieved.

In the case study an attempt is made to establish whether there was any tension between the two concerns. Was it, for example, possible to observe ways in which the dynamics of sustaining collaboration influenced the final design of the day care provision? Conversely, was the existence of the publicly and mutually agreed objective to set up a day care facility seen to influence the relationships between members of the two agencies?

To disentangle means (here collaborative working) from ends (here a day care centre) is never wholly possible in the social sciences. Yet to anticipate some conclusions of the case study, evidence was collected that is highly suggestive about the ways that the process of inter-agency collaboration influences the outcome of that collaboration; also how planned outcomes can influence the process of collaboration. Such findings are, arguably, of interest in the light of current debates about welfare, and in particular about the role of the voluntary sector working in partnership with the statutory sector. These debates are explored further in Chapter 3 which looks at some social policy developments which provide the background for this initiative; in particular the organisation of the project, the role of voluntary organisations and the financing of the voluntary sector are discussed.

First of all, however, Chapter 2 explains and evaluates the research methods employed during the course of the study.

The remaining chapters trace the progress of the project from the time the researcher became involved in December 1979, which was nine months before the first project house opened, until the end of the first year of the project's operation.

Chapter 4 describes the collaboration between Bedeburgh and Charity X in setting up the day care project. The objectives of the agencies, the resources each made available to the project, and the mechanisms through which the agencies organised their collaboration are explored.

Chapter 5 reflects on the plans for the day care project. The blueprints for the project are examined in the light of some research and practice literature. The focus of the chapter is, then, on the end result of the collaboration and it approaches the problem of to what degree the case study project has been dictated by current thinking about day care practice, and to what extent the project has been constrained by the collaboration process.

The next stage of the researcher's contact with the project was during its first year of operation, from September 1980 to August 1981. A study was made during that year of the ways that the plans for the project were implemented. The findings of this stage of the study are reported in Chapter 6; they are pertinent to an understanding of both the process of collaboration and the day care service that was established.

The latter theme is pursued in Chapter 7. Here different day care traditions within the statutory and voluntary sector are described to emphasise the varied roots of the approach adopted by the project.

Finally, some tentative policy implications drawn from the experience of the organisation and early work of the project are elaborated in Chapter 8.

But first it is necessary to explain how the research came to be undertaken and to introduce the project in a liitle more detail.

Research Role

The research was begun when the researcher was funded by Charity X to monitor and evaluate the proposed day care project. The researcher took up post in December 1979. At that time no other staff had been appointed to the project; the first appointment, that of project director, was made at the end of March 1980.

The intention of Charity X in making a research appointment was that some kind of outcome evaluation , to measure the effects on the children of the day care service, would be conducted. Whilst the nine month research contract was too short to allow the researcher herself to undertake a before and after study, the hope was expressed that it would be possible to design or identify appropriate questionnaires and tests that could be administered by project staff to enable an overall assessment of the project.

For theoretical, methodological and practical reasons, this suggested approach was not pursued by the researcher. One important consideration was that the proposed strategy relied on the researcher, who for over a third of her initial contract was the sole member of staff, deciding in advance of the project opening, what the precise goals of the project with regard to the children would be and, then, establishing procedures for testing whether these presumed goals had been fulfilled. This would have put a straitjacket on the project which would seem to run counter to the stated objectives of retaining a flexible approach. A more fruitful starting point seemed to be a scrutiny of the existing state of the project, its planned objectives, its target population, its location and its accommodation. This starting point seemed more realistic for the early stages of an

experimental initative and offered the researcher the opportunity to amass background information likely to be of value to the project director on his appointment. The research stance adopted was akin to ethnographic approaches in sociological research - living with the subject of study and collecting a variety of kinds of information in order to build up as full a picture of events as possible. The goals of the research, then, were not evaluative in the narrow sense of solely measuring effects on children, but in a broader sense of exploring both how the project came into being and the process of offering a particular day care service.

In general terms, this research approach was continued after agreement was reached with Charity X that the research should be extended to include the first year of the project's work. However, once the project was open, the study focussed more narrowly on events within the project.

The methods of data collection employed by the researcher thus included: scrutiny of files and documents; discussion with those who planned the project and those who implemented the plans; informal interviews with parents of children at the project; observation of daily activities at the project and attendance at planning and management and committee meetings.

The Project

The stated intentions of Charity X and Bedeburgh in establishing the day care project were that the project should provide an alternative approach to the care of the under fives, an approach that would provide a more flexible and cheaper service than is available in purpose built

social services day nurseries. A written statement which was agreed by both agencies prior to the opening of the project described its philosophy and objectives as follows:

> "The focus of the project will be on young children, primarily from the Sudbury estate (New Town is made up of sixteen villages around one shopping centre). It will offer a variety of flexible services for families requiring day care facilities for their children, including day care from 7.30a.m. to 6.00p.m., occasional sessions for children with special needs, contractual support for children whose families can be helped by limited intervention and integrated provision for handicapped and non-handicapped children. There is the possibility of the following services being explored once the project has established itself : occasional residential provision for local children or part families, a latchkey service for the siblings of children using the house, holiday play schemes for the immediate area, an advice centre for the neighbourhood.
>
> It is crucial that the project should always be flexible and respond naturally to the needs of the area in a positive, constructive, sensitive and challenging manner. This response should be considered a shared one between child, parent, social worker, neighbourhood, day care parent and family house staff. The project is not intended to work with the child in isolation of either its family or its environment. We are concerned primarily with the quality of care that this sort of small, informal unit can offer a certain sort of child in certain sorts of situation. Staff will be encouraged to concentrate on providing a natural, stable, caring environment for the children and their families." (1).

With regard to the physical provision of the project, it was to be housed in two, adjoining terraced houses in New Town and these were to be furnished "in the manner of an ordinary home with three piece suite, sideboard, bookcases, storage facilities etc."(2). Each house was to accommodate six children aged 0-4 years. The staffing proposals for the project were for one project director, four qualified nursery nurses and four parent helps. The latter were to be local people who had had the "experience of bringing up their own children successfully". The philosophy underlying the staffing plans was that the mix of staff would enable "blending the natural maternal approach with the professional training"(3).

The particular location of the project was selected for diverse reasons. Charity X wished to extend its work to this northern area of the country and Bedeburgh provided an appropriate contact. Within that local authority it was New Town's social services area team that successfully argued that the town, with its youthful population, was experiencing acute growing pains (reflected in its high delinquency rates, numbers of lone parents and worrying mental health statistics) and would benefit from the type of service that the project could offer. The proposed site of the scheme within New Town, Sudbury Estate, was regarded by Bedeburgh Social Services Department as "an area of particularly high social need"(4).

The day care project opened its doors to children in September 1980. It was housed in two, adjoining, three bedroomed, terraced maisonettes on Badbury estate in New Town. Initially only one house was open to children. In December 1980, once the project became known locally, and more equipment became available, the second house opened.

Eleven staff posts were actually assigned to the project for: one project director, a deputy director, four nursery nurses, four parent helps and one administrator. No specific appointments were made for a cook or domestic staff. The household chores were shared amongst the nursery nurses and parent helps. Each week one member of staff in each home was responsible for preparing meals. Nine of the staff posts were filled by the time the project opened and the two remaining nursery nurse posts were filled shortly thereafter. There was some staff turnover during the year. The deputy left at the end of February 1981 and a replacement appointed five months later, at the end of July. Also two nursery nurses and one parent help left during the first year. Replacements for these staff were found in a matter of weeks.

The numbers of pre-school children attending the project gradually increased over the first year. The houses were each registered by Bedeburgh Social Services Department for six, full time equivalent, places. In practice the places were allocated on a sessional basis. The children could attend for any combination of morning or afternoon sessions. Criteria for allocation of sessions included staff and parents' evaluations of what was required for the child and the family and, of course, the practical criterion of the number of spare sessions available in the weekly programme. The project records state that on 8th September 1980 (the first day on which a record was made) six children attended the project in total. By the end of September 1980, daily attendance had risen to around ten children, and by the end of the first year average daily attendance for both houses was about twelve children a day. In the four weeks up to 17th July 1981, an average of 21 children attended daily.

One morning in June

It is not possible to depict an average session at the project but to give a flavour of activities at the project one morning session will be described.

Eight children and four staff were in the house. By 9.15 a.m. most of the children had arrived. Whilst two of the mothers were having a cup of coffee, the children played with the toys in the ground floor room. The children then divided into groups for activities. Four went upstairs with one member of staff to play with jigsaws and construction toys. Two other children went with a second member of staff to the local shops. The remaining two children stayed downstairs and made plastic models with the third member of staff. The fourth member of staff was preparing the break time snack and the lunch in the kitchen. By 10.15 a.m. all the children had completed their activities, washed their hands and had gathered downstairs for the mid-morning break of toast and a drink. After the break, the children went outside to play on the big toys - bicycles, toy cars, a toy engine. The last activity, before another hand washing session and lunch at 11.45 a.m., was singing and dancing games for all the children.

The project has not confined itself solely to work with the under-fives. As the first year progressed several other areas of work were tentatively explored. For example, there was an attempt to introduce some latchkey provision for local schoolchildren; the project director was involved in establishing a summer playscheme in the estate; some local children attended the project during their summer holidays for coaching in literacy and numeracy skills. The main work of the project during the first year was, though, in providing a service for the under

fives and their families. It is this service which is the focus of the thesis.

This chapter has outlined the structure and broad argument of the thesis and introduced the case study project. The following chapter will describe the research methods employed in the study.

ESTABLISHING THE PROJECT : A DIARY OF SOME KEY EVENTS

September 1978	: first meeting between Charity X and Bedeburgh
April 1979	: Bedeburgh's preliminary proposal received by Charity X
December 1979	: researcher took up post
January 1980	: project proposals submitted to Bedeburgh's Social Services Committee for approval
February 1980	: the project and its planned location in an "area of high social need" publicised in local newspaper
March 1980	: project director took up post
May 1980	: decision to change the project's location
July 1980	: first steering group meeting for the project held
August 1980	: keys to the newly designated project accommodation made available; project staff commenced work and training sessions held
September 1980	: first children joined the project; research worker's contract ended
October 1980	: completion of Bedeburgh's registration procedure enabling project to accept children

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Figure 1

CHAPTER 2

"DOING THE RESEARCH"

This chapter describes the various stages of this research study and explains the choice of research methods adopted.

As was noted in Chapter 1, the researcher made an early decision not to attempt the quasi-experimental evaluation of the project apparently anticipated by the sponsoring agencies but rather to evaluate the development of the project, offering as near complete a description as possible of the sequence of events. This approach takes into account the oft-observed characteristic of social policy initiatives, that they do not have well defined objectives whose achievement (or otherwise) can be easily measured. The broad aims of social programmes and how to achieve these are likely to be subject to redefinition and revision in the light of practical experience. Research designs need to accomodate to this reality, not to ride roughshod over it. This contemporary history approach can be of some value to the policymaker in providing a guide to the outcomes and pitfalls of a particular initiative. As Marris and Rein argued in commenting on the experience of researching the American programmes against poverty in the 1960s:

> "The whole process - the false starts, frustrations, adaptations, the successive recasting of intentions, the detours and conflicts - needs to be comprehended. Only then can we understand what has been achieved, and learn from that experience. Research in this sense is contemporary history. Even though no one ever again will make exactly the same journey, to follow the adventures of the projects offers a general guide to the dangers and

> discoveries of their field of action. From such a guide, anyone may evaluate the experience according to his purposes." (1)

At the time of the researcher's appointment in December 1979, plans for the project were well advanced with a possible site chosen but no staff appointments made. The researcher's involvement with the project continued until near the end of the first year of the project's life. During this time the researcher undertook five main tasks.

First, was the task of collecting background data about the socio-economic characteristics of the population of New Town and particularly the residents of the estate where it was proposed to site the project. These data were cited in the discussions, referred to in Chapter 4, about the appropriate location for the project.

Secondly, the researcher scrutinised the plans for the project drawn up by Bedeburgh and Charity X to consider the assumptions on which these were based and what might be gleaned from the day care literature about their validity. The material collected for this exercise has been incorporated into Chapter 5.

These first two tasks were undertaken by the researcher largely on her own initiative as sole representative of the project in the early stages. The third task was one which Charity X asked the researcher to undertake, namely a consideration of what records the project should keep. The charity had assumed that the researcher could establish a recording system that would provide the data for an evaluation of the project after three years, at which time the charity's association with the project would cease. The researcher drew up some record sheets that could be used to collect some information about the children attending

the project and how long they attended the project; also to record any staff and parent observations about the children's progress. These records were not, however, intended for use as a means of evaluating the outcome of the work of the project. At the time of their preparation the objectives of the project were a subject for debate. It was, therefore, unclear what data could be collected to assess the progress made towards achieving the project's objectives.

The fourth task was to report on the setting up of the project: describing the collaboration between the local authority and Bedeburgh in setting up the project, the objectives pursued by each agency and the terms under which the project finally began. This material is included in Chapter 4.

The fifth, and final task, was to observe how the plans for the project were put into practice during the first year. For this the perceptions of the staff and parents as to what the project was offering were explored. This stage of the research is reported in Chapter 6.

In the course of the study a variety of research materials were collected and analysed. These included : fieldwork notes on meetings held between the sponsoring agencies; fieldwork notes on discussions and interviews the researcher had with staff of the sponsoring agencies, with project staff, with parents and with representatives of interested health, education, social work and community development agencies; the press handouts and other documents written by the sponsors about the project; the minutes of project management committee meetings; other project records; recorded observations of the daily activities of the project and, lastly, statistical data about the demographic characteristics of New Town's population, the geographic distribution of

social work cases and the take up of other provision for the under fives in the town.

A contemporary history approach differs from quasi-experimental methods in at least three ways. In the former approach, study participants are treated as subjects rather than objects of research; the programme of events being studied is not constrained by the research design and, consequently, the practitioners are free to redefine and adapt their methods.

In a quasi-experiment, the researcher has to gain the co-operation of practitioners in holding constant both their objectives and the means by which they achieve these objectives. Furthermore, the researcher has to devise ways of isolating and controlling the study variables and develop reliable and valid techniques for the measurement of change in these variables. A number of studies in social and community work have employed quasi-experimental methods but in the main have not been able to adhere strictly to the necessary criteria (2). Human beings are not passive objects to be studied under laboratory conditions and problems of contamination are hard to avoid. The experimental variable, the treatment programme, may not be strictly maintained which prevents the isolating and measuring of relevant variables. Conflict may arise between the researcher attempting to implement her research design and the practitioner whose prime concern is to perform her job as well as she is able.

As the quotation from Marris and Rein suggests, the contemporary historian is concerned, not with controlling and manipulating variables, but with documenting what actually happened and, drawing on the accounts

of the participants themselves, with building up an understanding of why it happened.

The relationship between the researcher and practitioner may correspond to the model advanced by Lees and Lees in their discussion of action research:

> "1. Evaluation of a particular situation
> 2. Decision about what needs or can be improved
> 3. Strategy to bring about improvement
> 4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of action
> 5. Re-assessment of the situation with a view to further and perhaps modified action strategies if considered desirable." (3)

Alternatively, the researcher may, as Marris and Rein hint in the quotation above, leave policymakers or practitioners to draw such conclusions from their research findings as seem relevant to their own problems and projects.

During the course of the researcher's association with the case study project, at only one stage was research information collated at precisely the time the sponsoring agencies could draw on it in reaching a decision. This was the data relevant to agreeing a final site for the project and these were considered by the sponsors. At this point, then, the relationship between researcher and practitioners approximated that described by Lees and Lees. The remaining research reports, on the setting up of the project and the experience of the first year, took longer to write and were not immediately available to the sponsors. They were simply one of a number of resources available to the sponsors in making decisions about the future of this or other planned projects.

This chapter has discussed how the researcher went about her task. The concluding chapter of the thesis will return to the topic of research methods in a discussion of the ways that research methods and theoretical models interact. The next chapter will discuss the significance of the case study with regard to broader social policy trends.

CHAPTER 3

"THE BEST MEANS"

> "Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best ends by the best means". (Frances Hutcheson 1694-1746 in INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGINAL OF OUR IDEAS OF BEAUTY AND VIRTUE,1V).

The case study project was organised under the auspices of a major voluntary organisation in collaboration with a local authority social services department. This partnership reflected both important views about the best way forward in welfare and the prevailing economic climate. This section of the thesis discusses the growing emphasis placed upon an enhanced role for the voluntary sector; the varied sources of, and varied reasons for, that emphasis; but also some challenges to unqualified support of voluntarism in the guise of welfare pluralism and some financial implications of changing statutory-voluntary relations.

Within the framework suggested in the introductory chapter, the discussion here is focussed on the collaborative approach employed by Bedeburgh and Charity X. The wider context of statutory-voluntary agency relationships is mirrored in the detailed negotiations and agreements that took place in establishing the case study project.

Developments in the voluntary sector

The Wolfenden Committee Report on "The Future of Voluntary Organisations" published in I978 (1) is the most authoritative statement in recent years on developments in the voluntary sector. The committee

was established in 1974 by the Carnegie and Rowntree Trusts in order to "review the roles and functions of voluntary organisations in the United Kingdom over the next twenty five years" (2). One of the main reasons prompting the enquiry was that there had been no comprehensive review of the consequences for the voluntary sector of the organisation of statutory welfare services within the Welfare State some thirty years previously. The aims which the committee stressed in introducing its report were:

> "...to encourage the strengthening and extension of collective action to meet important social needs in the provision of health care, housing, welfare, the maintenance of minimum standards of income and the protection of the environment; second, to ensure that this provision should be so organised that it is consistent with maintaining a pluralistic system, that is, a system in which power is spread over several political, social and economic institutions and not concentrated in a few monolithic structures." (3)

The committee recognised that the statutory services together with informal help from family and friends are the main sources of help with social problems; and that the voluntary sector can best be analysed in terms of the ways that it "complements, supplements, extends and influences the informal and statutory systems" (4). With regard to the relationship between the voluntary and statutory sector Wolfenden pointed to the role of the voluntary sector in, for example, pioneering new methods of work; offering alternatives to statutory services; adding to the total amount of resources available for social welfare provision; providing services that it may be regarded as inappropriate for the state to provide (such as marriage guidance counselling); and

stimulating improvements to the statutory services by offering an alternative service and the possibility for the consumer to opt out of the state provision.

The committee, then, indicated the particular contributions of the voluntary sector both in terms of services and in terms of a political philosophy, that of pluralism. Nonetheless, the committee also recognised the limitations of the voluntary sector, and in particular its uneveness: "...there is no guarantee that voluntary effort will necessarily materialise where need is greatest, that standards of service will be maintained, or that the sector as a whole will operate in a co-ordinated manner." (5) It was seen as the responsibility of the statutory sector to ensure universal social welfare provision.

The Wolfenden Committee discussed the nature of the relationships between the statutory and voluntary sector and, in order to ensure a constructive relationship between the two sectors, recommended that: "...local authorities should have a positive policy towards the voluntary sector....[to] see that there is suitable machinery to enable the statutory and voluntary sectors to work together efficiently."(6) Whilst at the central government level: "....we address an appeal to the government, as the central strategic makers of social policy. It is for them to take, urgently, the initiative in working out, with the variety of agencies which are now operating in this field, a collaborative social plan which will make the optimum and maximum use of resource."(7)

The committee did recognise that the task it was setting the local authorities and central government was by no means straightforward. The report illustrates this in a lighthearted way by referring to Darvill's analysis of different types of collaboration between statutory and

voluntary agencies (8). Darvill carricatures five types of relationship: the abstention attitude describes the situation when each agency goes its own way; the call girl attitude describes local authorities which regard voluntary agencies as shameful but necessary conveniences; the suburban attitude describes those local authorities that prefer their voluntary agencies to be "polite, obedient, cheap and respectful"; the King Henry VIII attitude sums up those local authorities which allow voluntary agencies the freedom to experiment whilst retaining the right to chop off their heads (or their grants) if the experiment fails; and, finally, the intimate enemy attitude describes relationships where the conflict is brought out into the open and looked upon as natural and potentially useful.

Pluralism and the statutory-voluntary partnership

A principal concern of the Wolfenden Committee, then, was how to achieve satisfactory partnerships between the statutory and voluntary sector in order to encourage pluralistic welfare provision. The committee's intent that voluntary agencies should play a greater role in welfare provision reflected a more general trend of thought. In 1981 Adrian Webb and Gerald Wistow summmed up the previous decade as one when the pure doctrine of state welfare had collapsed (9). Certainly the advantages of welfare pluralism have been expounded in various policy reviews. Thus, following a critical review of state welfare, Francis Gladstone set out an agenda for gradualist welfare pluralism which he defined as :

> "Evolutionary rather than revolutionary this de-monopolising strategy would hinge on a steadily increasing role for voluntary action; it would also include elements of DECENTRALISATION (more local

involvement in decision making), DE-STANDARDISATION (more support for innovative and experimental programmes) and DE-PROFESSIONALISATION (more emphasis on informal caring and self-help together with a shift to prevention and the horizontal integration of services). In such a scenario the role of the government gradually becomes the upholding of equity in resource allocation, the enforcement of minimum standards, the fostering of more pluralistic legislation and the use of fiscal and regulatory law both for income maintenance and to re-inforce a preventive approach."(10)

Two years later Roger Hadley and Stephen Hatch prepared a similarly critical review of current welfare provisions leading also to a pluralistic solution. They prescribed the relationship between statutory bodies and voluntary organisations in their proposals for a new structure:

"Outline of a new structure.

In order to give coherence to the policies advocated here a sketch or summary of a possible alternative system is required.....

(I) Plural provision. A greater proportion of all forms of social service would be provided by voluntary organisations, the one major exception being social security. Thus instead of expanding the statutory services, there would grow up alongside them a variety of community based initiatives.

(2) Decentralisation and community orientation of statutory services. The predominant mode of statutory provision would be the community oriented one, implying flatter structures, a different interpretation of professionalism and re-inforcement as opposed to replacement of informal sources of care.

(3) Contractual rather than hierarchical accountability. In return for funding and the contracting out of more services to voluntary organisations, government, both local and central, would exercise a stronger monitoring and inspection role than at present.....
(4) Participation in representation. The counterpart of greater monitoring and inspection would be the participation of consumers and providers in statutory decision making....."(11).

These broad frameworks for reform of welfare services have been complemented by more detailed, practical recommendations as to how the changing relations between voluntary organisations and statutory bodies could be effected. For example, in 1981, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of County Councils and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations prepared guidelines as to how working relationships between local authority social services departments and voluntary organisations could be enhanced. The document included recommendations on grant aid, contracts, resource sharing and strategies for overcoming disagreements (12).

Views on voluntarism

The discussion so far has implied widespread support for a flourishing voluntary sector working either independently or in conjunction with statutory agencies. Support for the work of the voluntary sector is, though, based on diverse views about the organisation of the voluntary sector and how it should operate.

One important distinction within the organisation of the voluntary sector is between the more traditional voluntary sector and what is

sometimes called the new, or alternative, voluntary sector. The former includes such organisations as Dr. Barnado's. Characteristically such agencies are hierarchically organised and are staffed largely by professionally trained workers who offer a service to a designated clientele. Charity X falls into this category. The latter can be characterised as comprising a variety of groups, community groups, tenants associations and self help associations, for example, which are more co-operatively organised and which exist to further the common interests of the members themselves and others like them.

There are many other distinctions that could be drawn amongst the range of organisations within the voluntary sector. Voluntary organisations can be classified by charitable status, by sources of funding, by client group served or by geographic area covered. Widespread support for the voluntary sector may well be rooted in this diversity. Groups that support some aspects of voluntarism may be critical of other aspects. An example of this is the current government's attitude (in 1985) towards the voluntary sector and political activity.

The current government clearly supports the role of the voluntary sector, including the work of unpaid volunteers:

> "[Voluntary organisations] are not just a way of giving help and caring, vitally important though it is, and wonderful the work which [they] do: they are an example that we are a free people, and continue to be that and do things our own way. And that when we are free, this is the important thing, we do rise to our responsibilities and carry them out far better than any government. And so I could say that

> the great volunteer associations are really a vital part of the defence of our freedom of action. There must be a substantial element of private giving if independence of decision is to be maintained."(13)

Government support for the voluntary sector derives from the values of encouraging the morality of individual initiative, rather than dependancy on a welfare state. These social values accord with their economic policies which emphasise the importance of the free market based on ideas about consumer sovereignty operating through mechanisms of supply and demand. In a free market there should be no interference by the state or other monopoly interest. What is required is a minimum state that will safeguard the market by guaranteeing law and order and by framing laws that will facilitate the functioning of the market. The private sector, based on the market, is viewed as wealth creating; in contrast, the welfare state is regarded as both unproductive and reliant on income raised from the productive sector. Thus the welfare state is seen to hinder the operation of the free market. Support for the voluntary sector is, then, part of the logic of government policy.

Government support for the voluntary sector does not, however, extend to the involvement of groups within the voluntary sector in what is defined as political action. Some evidence for this lay in the government's proposed enquiry into what it regarded as left wing activism within the Citizens' Advice Bureau (April I983). And in the comments of the Deputy Director of the Centre for Policy Studies at this time: "professional pressure groups demanding.....public money.....They are becoming unelected professional politicians. Compassion has become professionalised; indignation provides a livelihood."(14)

Seen from other perspectives, it is the range of activities, including those undertaken by so-called alternative elements within the voluntary sector, that are making the sector more attractive and worthwhile. In the past traditional left wing groups tended to be unenthusiastic about the voluntary sector. It represented for them the patronage of the upper and middle classes and, more importantly, was seen to divert attention from the role of the central and local state in ensuring adequate and equitable welfare provision for those in need. As more critical attention has been directed to the outputs of the welfare state, and the power which welfare professionals can exert over their clients (15), there has been a significant growth of support amongst particularly the libertarian left for some forms of voluntary effort:-

> "Voluntary effort.....[is] more and more about self-organisation and mutual aid, often by particular groups of consumers politically aware of the shortcomings of state services.....Today there are thousands of single issue organisations, involving millions of people in fund-raising, pressure group politics, and perhaps most importantly, active and self-respecting mutual aid. Such activity is central to any definition of socialism."(16)

If this alternative voluntary sector has particular appeal to the libertarian left, it has also been the home of various initiatives dear to the women's movement. For women traditional voluntary activity may mean their acting as unpaid or cheap substitutes for better paid welfare workers. Yet involvement in voluntary activity, in the shape of the playgroup movement, women's refuges, tenants and other community associations, has also offered women channels both for exerting some control over their lives and offering the opportunity to gain confidence and experience.

To sum up, the voluntary sector commands the support of groups across the political and gender spectra, but, as Adrian Webb has pointed out, this does not mean that the various groups speak with one voice:-

> "Non statutory, social welfare is clearly an idea whose "time has come". Local action, conferences, ministerial speeches and a variety of publications all proclaim the same message. But the message presently has the qualities associated with Babel: it is being uttered in many different professional and political languages."(17)

Welfare pluralism revisited

It would appear, then, that increased voluntary activity, and a move to welfare pluralism, is widely and favourably regarded but that the support may be offered in the absence of carefully agreed definitions as to what is involved in welfare pluralism. As Webb has pointed out, there are a number of issues requiring clarification. He has identified five drawbacks to uncritical support of the blanket, gradualist welfare pluralism advocated by Francis Gladstone. Webb's criticisms are as follows. Welfare pluralism:

> "1. tends to sound like a case of special pleading for the voluntary sector in hard times, at the expense of the state sector;
> 2. lacks the specific content and proposals needed to take us beyond simply producing 'more of the same' in the non-statutory sector;
> 3. tends to take as given the virtues claimed for the non-statutory sector - which are poorly tested (e.g. the opportunities for "participation" through, and the cost effectiveness of, non-statutory provision);

4. denies these same virtues to the statutory sector and potentially distracts attention from the need to transform, rather than transcend, the state as provider of services;
5. assumes that the virtues claimed for the non-statutory sector will survive the strains of expansion and that non-statutory provision is and will remain relatively uncontaminated by the ills which are said to beset state services (e.g. impersonal and inflexible service, "trade union mindedness", and spiralling costs)."(18)

Taking welfare pluralism to mean an expanding non-statutory sector, such that this sector both adds to, and in part replaces existing state welfare provision, Webb's preferred strategy to blanket gradualist welfare pluralism, is one of careful monitoring and evaluation of selected pilot experiments.

The project reported here does not fall into Webb's category of a selected pilot experiment for it was not designed as a conscious experiment in welfare pluralism. Nonetheless the project's characteristics make it of some interest to advocates of the political philosophy of welfare pluralism. It involved close collaboration between a local authority and a major voluntary agency; it was attempting to pioneer what was seen as a comparatively new form of provision in day care in the authority, one that could be developed elsewhere; and, it was trying to make thrifty use of resources through the avoidance of the capital costs of building new day nurseries and the institution of a low cost, participatory alternative.

Financing the Voluntary Sector

The final issue in this chapter concerns the financing of the voluntary sector. Welfare pluralism requires the voluntary sector to play a vigorous role in the provision of welfare services. Yet if the voluntary sector is to play a more vigorous and expanded role in the provision of welfare services, then the necessary financial support has to be obtained.

It is hard to obtain detailed, accurate information about the financial resources of voluntary organisations and about the proportions of their resources that come from government sources. It is clear that during the 1970s central government increased its allocation to voluntary bodies quite considerably. The Wolfenden Report noted that grants from central government sources rose from £19 million in 1974/75 to £35 million in 1976/77 - an increase rather more than the rate of inflation. Also, in the eighteen months following October 1975 and the introduction of the Job Creation Programme, voluntary organisations received grants of over £30 million by setting up schemes under the programme (19).

Commenting on these figures, Wolfenden made it clear that the income from the statutory sector was still only a minority of the total income for voluntary organisations; for dependence on statutory funding would undermine the pluralistic approach advocated in the report. Yet whilst it may remain only a minority proportion of their incomes it is clear that the money received from government is significant from the perspective of the voluntary sector. In 1981, for example, Webb and Wistow noted the "considerable and continuing dependence of voluntary provision on state financial support" (20). This suggestion is

supported by Stephen Hatch's examination of information on government grants to voluntary organisations. Hatch concludes that between 1976/77 and 1981/82, government grants have risen from £36 million to £130 million, and that grants given by quangos have risen from £28 million to £100 million. Hatch suggests that when adjustment is made for price increases, this is a real increase of two times (21).

Elsewhere in his paper, Hatch noted that of the £100 million of grants made by quangos, in 1981/82 £95 million was granted by the M.S.C.. More recently, in October 1983, an editorial for the bulletin of the Association of Researchers in Voluntary and Community Action suggested that "M.S.C. grants easily exceed £100 million" (22). The extent of M.S.C. funding to the voluntary sector in particular areas is further illustrated by the finding that the M.S.C. allocated around two and a half million pounds to social and community work projects in the voluntary sector in Sunderland in I984/85 (23).

Voluntary agencies have particular and varied objectives. In general terms, voluntary agencies employ M.S.C. funded staff to further the objectives of the agency, whatever these may be. In contrast, the function of the M.S.C. is to create employment opportunities. In pursuing this objective it is evident that the M.S.C. is likely to adopt policies that voluntary agencies could find damaging to their interests. Thus money from the M.S.C. is given according to clearly specified conditions which constrain the development of services by the voluntary sector and which have been the subject of much criticism from the voluntary sector (24). Furthermore, adult employment programmes have changed during the past five years from the Special Temporary Employment Programme, to the Community Enterprise Programme and currently (1985) to the Community Programme. Each of these programmes has offered temporary

employment for adults but the precise nature and terms of that employment have been modified with the introduction of each new programme. The programme changes have presented their own problems for voluntary agencies sponsoring schemes. The case study discussed here provides the opportunity to examine in some detail the use of temporary employment programmes within a voluntary agency project.

This chapter has related the characteristics of the case study to wider social policy concerns and, in particular, shown how the case study model illustrates aspects of contemporary views as to how welfare provision ought and is developing. The following chapter will turn to the events in the project and discuss the circumstances under which it was established.

CHAPTER 4

"HARD BARGAINS"

This chapter concentrates on the process of collaboration between the two agencies, Charity X and Bedeburgh, in establishing the day care project. It takes the major themes of Chapter 3 and considers how in this case they worked out in practice. The chapter is based on data collected through examination of relevant agency documents and files, observation and participation at meetings where project plans were discussed and discussions with key personnel. Also, for the five months from the date of his appointment until the project opened, the researcher shared an office with the project director and was party to the negotiations he was involved in.

Models of collaboration

Other research studies in the welfare field which have examined factors encouraging and facilitating co-operation between welfare agencies appeared to offer two fruitful, but alternative, starting points for analysis of the data collected.

The first approach stresses the exchanges involved in collaboration between agencies. Hence, in a preliminary discussion of findings from an American study of relationships amongst community health and welfare agencies, Levine and White explain the use of a model of exchange in interpreting their data:

> "Organisational exchange is any voluntary activity between two organisations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realisation of their respective goals or objectives" (I).

The authors argue that the need for exchange arises because health and welfare organisations operate in conditions of scarcity. The health agencies studied by Levine and White, whose main goal was the prevention and cure of illness, required patients, resources (such as medical expertise and appropriate equipment) and skilled medical staff in order to function. One or more of these resources is likely to be obtained via some form of exchange with another agency, for example, through the referral of patients from another health agency. Levine and White also examine tentatively some conditions enabling exchange between organisations. They note the influence of such factors as whether organisations have independent access to any resources they require or whether they are reliant on exchange; the kind of service offered by the organisation - agencies offering a treatment service are more likely to be involved in exchanges than, for example, heath education agencies; and, a final condition considered, was that of organisational domain, agreements between agencies about their respective objectives and client populations facilitated exchanges between them.

Levine and White's exchange analysis has been adopted elsewhere, for instance in Reid's analysis of agency collaboration in the field of juvenile delinquency and control in the United States (2). Initially Reid explores the value of the exchange framework in analysing collaboration. He notes that the model draws attention, first, to the importance of agency goals and how these may be furthered by collaborative working; secondly, to the use and acquisition of resources through inter-agency collaboration; and, thirdly, to the degree of

collaboration, whether it is ad hoc collaboration over particular cases, collaboration on an agreed basis for particular types of referrals, or collaboration on a joint programme of work.

Reid then considers some pre-requisite conditions for collaboration. He hypothesises that three conditions are required to enable effective co-ordination: the agencies concerned should (in Reid's terminology) have shared goals, complementary resources and efficient mechanisms for controlling whatever exchanges are involved.

The condition of shared goals is recognised by Reid as a complex condition. Obstacles include the realities that agencies have multiple goals, that goals may be hard to locate and define and that once they are defined any prior concensus between agencies on the basis of formal organisational goals may disappear. Thus police and social work agencies may share the formal goal of delinquency reduction but their methods of achieving this may differ substantially involving, in one agency, law enforcement procedures and, in the other agency, treatment of underlying psychological problems.

The operational goals of each agency would not, Reid argues, offer the basis for co-ordination. Assuming that collaborating agencies have shared goals, they require also to be able to offer each other resources for achieving these goals. For example, if agencies share goals but have inadequate resources for the fulfillment of their own goals, then exchange is difficult and collaboration is likely to be thwarted. Reid cites as effective use of complementary resources a situation whereby a police department can offer its knowledge of street violence and its power of legal sanction to a youth agency; the youth agency in its turn can offer to the police its skilled intervention with gang fighters.

Thus both agencies can co-operate in pursuing the shared goal of reducing gang fights.

Reid's final condition, of some form of control over collaboration, applies particularly to systematic co-ordination or administration of joint agency programmes. Relevant procedures may be contractual agreements, accountability agreements, joint agency meetings and allocating of responsibility to members within each agency. Success in implementing co-ordination is seen to depend partly on the complexity and cost of the controlling procedures. The end product of the collaboration must be seen as worth the cost of controlling the collaboration. In the light of his analysis, Reid's conclusion is:

> "The emphasis placed upon obstacles may leave the reader with the impression that unmediated co-ordination is very difficult to achieve and may even be an enterprise of dubious value. That is quite the impression we wished to convey."(3)

In contrast to a framework of exchange for analysing inter-agency co-ordination, another significant approach is one which stresses the advantages of planned co-ordination amongst agencies to ensure varied and effective service provision. This perspective on collaboration between agencies is rooted in policy planning in the 1960s and 1970s when better co-ordination between government agencies, and between government agencies and local communities, was thought to offer a solution to problems of social deprivation and planning blight (4). The C.D.P. research reports challenged whether the focus on efficient co-ordination amongst various welfare and planning bodies was relevant to the problems of disadvantaged areas.(5) Nonetheless a search for appropriate and efficient mechanisms of agency co-ordination has

survived. It surfaced in the Wolfenden Report where the role of the generalist local intermediary body in facilitating planned co-operation between agencies was discussed. Following the Wolfenden Report's scenario for a mixed social economy, one research study which focussed critically on these intermediary bodies, as a mechanism for improved planning procedures amongst voluntary bodies and between the voluntary and statutory sector, was that undertaken for the N.C.V.O. by Leat, Smolka and Unell. A preliminary conclusion of that research study was that:

> "....local bodies on both sides are caught up in their day-to-day tasks paying little attention to planning and broad policy questions. Planning is predominantly incremental and partnership, where it exists, is piecemeal and focussed around provision rather than policy PER SE. On the voluntary side partnership discussions centre on how statutory bodies could be more supportive of voluntary effort. On the statutory side such discussion centres around the ways in which the voluntary sector may help statutory bodies meet their responsibilities..... Where and when the two discussions happen to coincide there is what is currently called collaboration, and joint endeavour, and what is seen as the seed from which a future mixed social economy might grow."(6)

Collaboration in this case study

Policy initiatives tend to reflect the political, economic and legislative environment in which they are developed which helps to explain why, at a time when the political climate favoured an enhanced role for the voluntary sector, and when the economic climate was one of cutbacks in policy spending including that on child care provision (7),

Bedeburgh and Charity X should have developed their particular scheme. The representatives of Bedeburgh and Charity X did not, however, explicitly describe their collaboration as a model of joint planning that might be adopted by other agencies. It is the exchange model, rather than the planning model, which appears at first sight to fit the expressed motives of the officials of Bedeburgh and Charity X. Bedeburgh sought some financial resources and some expertise in new developments in child care from Charity X; whilst Charity X apparently welcomed a northern base from which to expand its operations. It is for this reason primarily that an exchange framework has been adopted for the initial analysis of the case study data on setting up the project. In particular, Reid's contentions about the necessary conditions for co-operation are examined here. His three conditions match closely the information gathered about the initial collaboration between Bedeburgh and Charity X. Thus the issues considered in the remainder of this chapter are:

a) the objectives of the two agencies in establishing the day care project;

b) the resources which each agency contributed to the project; and

c) the mechanisms by which the agencies organised their collaboration.

The accuracy of Reid's observations will be considered with regard to the evidence of the case study data.

Sharing objectives

As the project was being planned, the most often stated objective

was that it should meet the needs of the area and its residents. The initial proposal prepared by Bedeburgh highlighted this theme in the statement "it is important to attempt to assess children as individuals and provide for their very different needs appropriately" (8) and the theme recurred in other documents and discussions as the project has developed. As has already been noted, the most complete written statement about the project said: "that it is crucial that the project should always be flexible and respond naturally to the needs of the area in a positive, constructive and challenging manner" (9); the Director of Social Services in Bedeburgh has referred to the value of the project as being the "new, or rediscovery of old ways, of serving young families to explore what do families need" (10); and the press release on the project referred to the "essential element of the scheme [as] the neighbourhood and children and their parents in a substitute home, relaxed informal and familiar, with all that implies for the prospect of successfully meeting needs"(11).

How the objective of meeting need should be met was discussed almost solely in terms of such issues as to what the project should do and how its work should be carried out. For example, "the project will provide day care facilities for children, occasional sessions for children whose families can be helped by limited intervention...." (12); "each [of the two houses] will accommodate six children from the immediate neighbourhood and each will have a qualified nursery nurse and a local woman who who has already successfully brought up her own family to care for them". As regards the ways in which the project should undertake its work, "the project ....promises to be flexible, non-bureaucratic, far cheaper and more versatile than conventional forms of help"(13).

These plans for the project depended on implicit interpretations about need or needs. The needs in question are those of a particular locality, its families and, especially, its children. Furthermore, these needs can be helped by providing day care and other services to the children and their families. Yet these interpretations of need are not wholly unambiguous, as has become evident in the planning and development of the project. One aim of this section of the report will be to trace the different definitions of need that have been employed by the project's sponsors and to assess the consequences for the project of any ambiguities.

Obscuring need

Meeting need is the raison d'etre of the social services (14) yet reference to the task of meeting need can serve to obscure several issues. For example, whose needs are being referred to; who will decide on the needs to be dealt with; what are regarded as the causes of need; which measures are being devised to meet the needs. One reason that these questions may be overlooked is that whilst there is no disagreement on the desirability of meeting needs, it is often unclear what is meant by need or social need. A major pre-occupation of the Seebohm Committee was with the concept of social need and the committee's proposals for a unified service were designed to ensure that social need would be met more effectively:"....a unified department will provide better services for those in need"(15). Yet even this influential committee has been criticised for failing to give an adequate definition of social need (16). It can be argued that it is the researcher's task to try and clarify the assumptions of policymakers and practitioners in the social policy field and many research studies have focussed on the task of defining and measuring need. Yet as one

research review of a number of major studies on the topic of social need has suggested, researchers have not always succeeded in producing a satisfactory definition of social need. The review refers to:

> ".....the general abnegation of the tasks of conceptualisation and theoretical development....the failure to produce a clear definition of "need".....its definition merely in terms of measurement operations.....repeated circular argumentation,.....inconsistent usage of the term "need" and an over reliance upon administrative and practitioner categories."(17)

Dimensions of need

In order to explore more precisely the ways that the sponsors of this project defined need operationally, three aspects of the development of the project will be reviewed. These are decisions about the location of the project, the children to be included in the project and the role of parents in the project.

Where was the need?

Locating the project proved a more complex process than was initially envisaged by the two agencies. The sequence of events leading up to the final decision on the location of the project was as follows. The original location for the project was to be Sudbury estate which was widely regarded by the New Town residents and by the staff of local official agencies as a problem estate. Bedeburgh Social Services Department described the estate as one of high social need. The estate did not, however, comprise uniform housing, nor, according to officials, were problems distributed evenly throughout the estate. Such

circumstances are not uncommon. Townsend, amongst others, criticises area deprivation policies precisely because: "....within all or nearly all defined priority areas there will be more persons who are not deprived than there are deprived."(18) The families of Sudbury estate who were regarded as having more problems were housed in a complex of medium rise flats known as the Ethelbert Avenue flats.

This modern block of flats won a design award on its completion. Its reputation deteriorated when Bedeburgh's Housing Department began to rehouse what they defined as poor tenants in the flats. Following an accumulation of problems the Housing Department, in the summer of 1978, decided that a change of policy was required. Reletting of the flats ceased whilst the department considered alternative options. In September 1979 the decision to sell all but one block of flats was taken and re-housing the tenants of 601 of the 678 flats commenced. By mid-December 1979, 534 of the flats had been emptied and the tenants dispersed throughout New Town (19).

The Housing Department's new policy had clear relevance for the project which had been designed primarily to serve the tenants of the flats. Indeed, the initial proposal had been that the project should be housed in two of the flats so that the project would be geographically easily accessible to those it was designed to help (20). The emptying of the flats had implications also for the demographic and social composition of Sudbury estate, for the flats represented more than a third of the total housing stock of the estate (21).

In view of these developments, the research worker and, on his appointment in March 1980, the project director questioned whether this estate was an appropriate site for the project. They were uncertain

whether the remaining families on this estate were in particularly high social need. They also pointed out to the project sponsors that there was quite substantial provision for the under fives on the estate. One nursery class, designed specifically to serve Sudbury estate, opened in September 1979 and the estate also contained a long established nursery school which serves the whole of New Town.

Once the changes that had occurred in Sudbury estate were raised for discussion, a protracted debate ensued between Charity X and Bedeburgh as to whether these changes had any significance for the project. The debate focussed in large part on whether Sudbury estate remained an area of high social need. Criteria for locating the project, other than that of social need also emerged. A brief consideration of the various arguments advanced is worthwhile as they illustrate in more detail the various objectives in establishing the project. These arguments can be summarised as follows. In support of the planned location on Sudbury estate, different representatives of Bedeburgh stated that:-

> Sudbury estate remained one of the most needy areas in New Town. This was evidenced as a high proportion of families from the estate, and from the neighbouring Catbury estate, were known to the Social Services area team, were judged by health visitors to be at risk or already had their children's names on the waiting list for the existing day nursery.
>
> a rather different argument used to back up the first was that the location of the project on Sudbury estate was near the only social services day nursery in New Town and this would enable staff exchanges at times of staff sickness and other emergency.

in some contradistinction to these arguments, one representative from Bedeburgh favoured Sudbury as a location on the grounds that the project was not intended to be a community project but a project designed to meet the needs of highly distressed children known to the social services area team. It did not, therefore, matter especially where the project was located. If necessary children who would benefit from the project could be bussed in from other parts of the town.

In support of the argument that a change of location for the project should be considered, representatives of Charity X stated:-

the situation in Sudbury estate had changed markedly since the emptying of the Ethelbert Avenue flats and the area could no longer be regarded as an area of high social need. This was crucial to the siting of the project as the project was designed essentially as a community project to serve an area of high social need. New Town had been built and developed as a series of small estates each with its own community centre and small shopping centre. The community oriented design of the town was an important factor in deciding on New Town as a suitable location for the project.

furthermore, it was argued that it was important that there should be support on the chosen estate for the project but such support was not forthcoming in Sudbury. Following the initial newspaper reports, representatives of the community association were hostile to the project. They expressed concern that if a project of this kind were located in the estate, the estate would be less likely to lose its problem tag - even though the flats had been emptied.

> an additional argument against Sudbury was that the project would not even be filling a gap in service provision. There was already considerable educational provision for the under fives on Sudbury estate as compared with other estates in New Town where there was no statutory provision.

Debates are never tidy, they include a mix of issues, and this one was no exception. To review some of the points raised in a little more detail: the argument about whether Sudbury remained an area of high social need proved the most sterile. At one meeting conflicting statistics were quoted both to support and undermine the degree of need that prevailed in Sudbury. Townsend's arguments about the difficulties of attempting to define areas of need have been referred to already; to quote another part of his findings: "However economically or socially deprived areas are defined, unless nearly half the areas in the country are included, there will be more poor persons living outside them than in them."(22) This statement underlines the difficulties the agencies encountered in comparing two areas in New Town. In point of fact, apparently the most fundamental dichotomy in views was on the issue as to whether the project was to be a community project or not. This is illustrated by the preferences stated about whether service should be given only to those living in a particular estate or not, the importance or lack of importance attached to other factors such as nearness of other social service provision and the importance or lack of importance attached to community residents' support for the service.

The ideas depicting a "community project" were not confined to whether only residents of a designated area should participate in the project. The community idea came to include the notion that the project would meet the needs as defined, in part at least, by that community.

In contrast, the alternative perspective tended to assume that the project would primarily be concerned to provide a service to children designated by professionals as being in need. Neither of these views, the community or the professional view, is unambiguous in itself. For example, it can be predicted that there would be disparate views in any locality as to how such a project might function. Equally there are ambiguities in the notion of a professional service, which are perhaps best illustrated with reference to evidence that professionals do not always agree in their assessments of clients' problems or of the services that clients require (23). Whatever the ambiguities within each perspective, it is arguable in this instance that the fundamental difference is between perspectives. Broadly speaking, according to the community perspective, families using the service should have some control over the nature and extent of that service. Such control would not exist in the professional model.

The concern here has been to elaborate the differing objectives for the project that became evident in the debate about location. By way of postscript, the so-called community lobby won this case. Whilst it was generally agreed that no other area of New Town presented the same problems as Sudbury estate had formerly presented, the decision was finally taken to change the project's location to Badbury estate. The factors which influenced this decision were that there was no statutory provision for the under fives on Badbury estate and that the community representatives on the estate welcomed the proposal. The extent, however, to which the professional or community perspective would predominate in the work of the project remained an empirical question.

Whose needs - the children

An important part of the debate about the most suitable location for the project was the discussion about the selection of children for it. In the earliest written proposal for the project, it was suggested that twelve children might be included in the project. This number was regarded as appropriate for the accommodation available in the flats and did not alter even when different accommodation was found. When the project finally moved into two houses on Badbury estate, the local authority registered the two houses for twelve full time equivalent places.

The question of selection and allocation of places assumed importance because of the small number of children the project could house relative to the numbers of 0-4 year olds (the target population) in any of the suggested catchment areas. The household census undertaken in New Town in 1978 records 4,945 0-4 year olds in the whole of New Town: in 1980, estimates of the 0-4 population for Sudbury estate was 497 children and for Badbury estate 424 children.

The various proposals for allocation of the limited number of places help to illustate further the diversity of objectives the sponsors had for the project. Alternative suggestions were that the places should be allocated to twelve highly distressed children; that they should be allocated to a balance of deprived, less deprived and normal children; or simply that they should be given to those children to whom the project staff's attention was drawn either by parents, health visitors or other persons.

The first proposal, that the project should serve particularly distressed or disadvantaged children, was based on an expectation that the project would comprise essentially a special social work unit. According to this plan, children would be referred to the project by the social work area team following an assessment using a particular scheme or model of client distress that was used in Bedeburgh's area teams. Treatment plans would be developed for the children attending the centre and, once an improved measure on the distress scale was achieved, consideration would be given to moving the child to another facility such as the New Town day nursery, alternatively the child might return to the full time care of its parents. The families of the children in the unit would be offered intensive social work help.

The proposers of the second model argued that the intention was not to establish a specialised social work unit for particularly distressed children. Indeed at a very early stage in the negotiations that proposal was criticised with reference to Tizard's contention that ".....experience in other fields of social policy strongly suggests that selective services will, in time, come to have low standards: a service for the poor ends up as a poor service....."(24)

The counter proposal was that the project should serve a balanced population of children - including those who scored highly on scales of distress, disadvantage or deprivation, those whose scores demonstrated fewer problems and those with no apparent problems. In this way the "home from home" implied by the project's name could be created. It was argued that there would be no need for a specialised regime, as might be expected in a unit which deal solely with children labelled as having problems, and that there would be less likelihood of staff tensions

caused by the difficulties of dealing solely with very difficult children.

This second model had its own problems. The first model incorporated a measurement criterion to be used in selecting children - the distress scale. Whilst criticisms were made in discussions about the project of the assumptions and judgements required by the scale, the package was complete. The proposers of the second approach did not make explicit the ways in which the children would be judged in order to assess their level of deprivation or disadvantage. The problem is not negligible for the concepts of deprivation and disadvantage are as hard to define as that of need and a host of different criteria have been used in their definition and measurement (25).

The third model avoided difficulties of definition with its suggestion that those who presented themselves, or were referred by social workers or health visitors, should be included in the project. The project would then be moulded around families' accounts of what they needed. The difficulty would likely arise, though, that the project's facilities might prove too small to meet the demand.

To re-iterate the point, these different plans for the selection of children rest on very different assumptions and set different objectives for the task of meeting need.

The parents

The project was not concerned solely with the welfare of children: it was planned with regard to the welfare of the family as a whole. Again, how the rest of the family would be involved was the subject of

varying interpretations. Three main proposals emerged in discussions, of which two were concerned with ways of bringing about change in parental behaviour.

The first proposal suggested that parents would be likely to require some formal help or training. In his report to the Social Services Committee, Bedeburgh's Social Services Director stated that each house would contain "provision for parents where a part of the problem is seen to be the need for parental training", (26) apparently meaning training in appropriate standards of child care.

The second suggestion was that parents should be helped with, or treated for, the problems that may be the source of their difficulties in caring adequately for their children. This suggestion was linked to the concept of the project as a specialist social work unit with back up support services from the social services area team.

The third approach was quite different. The planned staffing of the project was for a mix of trained nursery nurses and parent helps in order, as the Director of Bedeburgh's Social Services Department described :"Thus we would be blending the natural maternal approach with the professional training."(27) At some stages in the planning of the project it was envisaged that these parent helps, who would be local residents with "experience of bringing up their own children successfully" (28) might be parents of children who had places in the project. They would be mothers whose children presented no particular problems and whose presence would be important in creating the home from home. It is argued that these different proposals regarding the role of parents in the project provide further evidence of the range of suggested objectives for the project.

To sum up, the reason for elaborating the objectives of the project as envisaged by the participants was to explore to what extent objectives were shared by Charity X and Bedeburgh. It has been argued here that the primary shared objective was that of meeting need. However, once this objective is considered in more detail, it becomes evident that participants had different and apparently incompatible objectives or plans for the project. For example, arguably the project could not be both a specialist social work unit and a community day care project.

It might be supposed that to the extent that there was a clash in perspectives, this clash occurred essentially BETWEEN the two organisations and for this reason did not emerge until plans were at a relatively advanced stage. In practice this was not always the case. Some disagreement on specific objectives was also evident within Bedeburgh's organisation and within Charity X's organisation. The best illustration of this point is the debate about which children should be included in the project. During the research worker's observations, representatives of Bedeburgh who were involved in the planning of the project argued in favour of a service only for the most distressed, a service for a balanced group and a service for those who present themselves. On the other hand, Charity X's representatives at different times favoured a service for a balanced group and a service for those who presented themselves and for whom a service might be advantageous. This example serves to reinforce the general argument that the reasons why Charity X and Bedeburgh had chosen to collaborate in establishing a day care programme cannot be explained adequately with reference to their shared objectives, however defined. Any shared agreement on the nature of the objectives was at a very general level and there was not

always agreement within the organisations as to the precise objectives of the scheme.

Complementary Resources

In one of the studies of collaboration between welfare agencies referred to earlier, it is argued that shared objectives are not enough to ensure collaboration between welfare agencies: "For exchange to occur each agency must be able to provide the other with resources it needs to achieve its goals."(29)

Questions pertinent to an assessment of this argument with regard to the collaboration between Charity X and Bedeburgh are: what resources were required to establish the project, who contributed these resources and what contribution did each agency make that complemented the resources made available by the other agency.

The project is housed in two, adjoining, two-storey maisonettes in Badbury estate, New Town. The properties are rented from New Town Development Corporation. The two maisonettes are identical and each have, downstairs, a living room, kitchen and cloakroom; upstairs, three bedrooms and a bathroom. At the time of opening the project, the project director's task was to ensure that the houses were decorated and furnished like "ordinary home[s]"(30); that the houses were adapted to conform to fire regulations; that the kitchens were stocked with cooking equipment and washing machines; and, finally, that adequate play materials were supplied for the children. All of these items involved capital expense.

In addition, there were revenue costs in running the project. Staff salaries, rents, rates, electricity and gas bills had to be paid; meals were supplied each day for the children; and supplies of certain play materials, such as paper and crayons, had to be replenished.

How were these met? During the first year of operation the salary of the project director was paid by Charity X who also made available £1,432 towards the running costs of the project. By December 1980, Bedeburgh had committed £200 towards the running costs of the project (with the possibility of a further contribution remaining open) and had provided some of the furniture and play materials required by the houses. But the bulk of the cost of the project was born neither by Charity X nor Bedeburgh, but by the government funded Manpower Services Commission Special Temporary Employment Programme (S.T.E.P.). All staff, excepting the project director, were employed under the terms of the temporary employment scheme on one year contracts and their wages were paid through the scheme. The terms of the S.T.E.P. included £300 per worker towards the costs of setting up the scheme. These extra payments for the ten staff employed on the temporary employment programme were used to pay the rents, rates, electricity and gas bills, to finance bulk food orders supplied by Bedeburgh to the scheme and to meet the costs of items of equipment supplied through the local authority's central purchasing department.

Other sources of income were the contributions made by parents whose children attended the project. Parents paid fees of 25 pence each day that a child attended. These fees provided some ready cash for the purchase of fresh food supplies. The parents also started a project social fund for which money was raised through raffles, coffee evenings and so forth. The money provided such extras as Christmas treats for the

children. The final source of income was donations by "friends" of the project.

There seems little evidence that Bedeburgh and Charity X pooled complementary financial resources in initially establishing this project (though it was true that each of the agencies, and especially Bedeburgh, devoted not inconsiderable staff time and energy to project planning and negotiations, and the gathering in of equipment). The fact remained that the main funding came from outside both of these organisations. To what extent the budget available was adequate for running the project will be reviewed in Chapter 6. The question of interest here is, if an exchange of resources is fundamental to collaboration, what was the understanding of each organisation as regards the funding of the project at the time of agreeing to establish the project.

In the proposals that Bedeburgh forwarded to Charity X in the spring of 1979 (31) the local authority stated confidently that it would be able to meet the capital costs of setting up the project, that is to provide the furnishings and play equipment. Additionally the revenue costs of rents, heating, provisions, consumable play equipment, telephone, breakages and a teacher's salary were to be met by the local authority. These were estimated at 1979 prices to amount to £6,100. The staff salaries would, it was hoped, be met by other agencies: the nursery nurse salaries by Charity X and the parent helper salaries through the S.T.E.P. scheme. Even allowing that some of the revenue costs, £1,200 approximately, could have been met by the extra payments made through the S.T.E.P. scheme, Bedeburgh was proposing a financial commitment of £4,900 <u>plus</u> capital costs.

In making its initial submission to Charity X for assistance with four nursery nurse staff salaries (stated to be about £8,900 per annum in 1979), Bedeburgh Social Services Department appear to have assumed that it was approaching a funding agency. The response from Charity X in the spring of 1979 was that they were an entrepreneurial agency rather than a funding agency: "Rather than contribute to a scheme our policy is usually to take on the management and development responsibilities initially, and then having established the scheme to hand it over to the appropriate local authority."(32) In practical terms in this project "taking on the management and development responsibilities" meant that Charity X paid the project director's salary and provided him with the advice and consultancy services available in Charity X's national organisation.

In the light of Charity X's negative response on the issue of nursery nurse salaries, Bedeburgh authority pursued an alternative solution, that of seeking the S.T.E.P. finance for the nursery nurse salaries as well as those of the parent helps. In September 1979, the Manpower Services Commission approved Bedeburgh's application. Perhaps because of internal staff changes, the full implications of this policy appear to have been realised by Charity X only in December 1979. By this time, with the appointment under its auspices of the research fellow, Charity X had made a fuller commitment to the project. At a meeting in December 1979, the disadvantages of relying almost wholly on S.T.E.P. funded, and thus temporary, staff in a child care project were argued quite strongly by Charity X. A compromise solution suggested by Bedeburgh at that meeting was that there could be an exchange of some S.T.E.P. staff employed for the project with permanent staff currently working in Bedeburgh's day nurseries; yet almost straight after the meeting the possibility of implementing such an exchange was dismissed

by Bedeburgh's Director of Social Services in a letter to Charity X (33). Nonetheless the possibility was pursued by Charity X in a series of letters written in February and March 1980. Eventually in May 1980, Bedeburgh agreed that one or two S.T.E.P. workers could be exchanged for permanent staff. (This option was not to prove workable during the first year of operation).

The staffing issue was not the only one to cause difficulty. Bedeburgh's original optimism about meeting capital costs had been modified considerably by early 1980. Indeed, in January 1980 Bedeburgh's Social Services Director assured his Social Services Committee that it "was recognised that [the project] would be experimental and should not, at this time, involve a financial input from the local authority." This report continued the "furniture and equipment [are] being gathered from a number of sources without cost but in addition a small sum allocated from S.T.E.P."(34). The tone of financial restraint in the report was said to be due to the expenditure cuts being imposed in local authorities. Eventually Bedeburgh's decision was modified to allow the project limited financial help from social services monies during its first year of work.

The project was launched but its chequered financial history left its mark. Most importantly, an almost complete annual turnover of staff seemed inevitable. This presented dilemmas for the staff themselves who were likely to be seeking more permanent positions for which the S.T.E.P. scheme was designed in part to give them preliminary training and experience. For the director, it meant that formally the project was a training ground for staff. Whilst for the children and families involved, the turnover of staff broke a principle of established child care practice that children should be able to build lasting

relationships with a stable staff (35). The S.T.E.P. scheme not only limited the length of staff employment but also the range of staff who might be considered for employment. Candidates for the scheme must not only have been unemployed for six months but have taken the trouble to register as such at the local Employment Office. It became clear in the course of recruitment for the scheme that this double qualification excluded many possible candidates.

The other main consequence of the funding arrangements was the difficulties experienced in equipping the project. At the outset the project was extremely poorly furnished and equipped and the project director did not have any resources to make good the deficiencies. During the early weeks, children were sent home to lunch as there was insufficient kitchen equipment to prepare a meal. Staff and residents of the area donated items to try and raise the physical standards of the house. Nearly three months after opening the director concluded that the houses were of a physically acceptable standard (36).

There was, then, in the earliest stages of the planning the project an understanding between Bedeburgh and Charity X that each would make a particular contribution. Charity X would provide, via its appointee the project director, expertise in developing community projects. Yet even once it became evident that Bedeburgh could not fulfill its proposed contribution and despite the staffing and other difficulties that were obviously confronting the project, the collaboration between the agencies continued.

This discussion seems to suggest that in addition to exploring the complementary resources that Reid argued were so fundamental to collaborative working, there might be some value in exploring the

perceptions of agency personnel as to whether they perceive themselves to be collaborating in a joint project.

Co-ordinating the collaboration

The final variable that will be discussed here is that of efficient mechanisms for maintaining the collaboration between agencies. One possibility here is of a formal contract between the agencies describing the nature and extent of a joint programme. No formal agreement was drawn up between Charity X and Bedeburgh prior to establishing the project but some arrangements for liaison on the project were made. For example, two principal officers responsible for day care within Charity X and Bedeburgh respectively were given responsibility for the project. It was agreed that the project director, once appointed, would receive local support and encouragement from Bedeburgh's Principal Officer for Day Care: also that the project director should work in close collaboration with New Town's Social Services Area Team and its controller (37). Another link between the two agencies would be through the project's management committee which the two day care officers from Bedeburgh and Charity X, as well as the local representatives, would attend.

One way of assessing the role of these agreed liaison arrangements is to consider their role in making important decisions about the project. Three topics of considerable importance in establishing the project and which have already been noted as the source of considerable debate are, first, the location of the project, secondly, the financing of the project and, thirdly, the staffing of the project. The planned liaison arrangements were superseded or overlooked in important decisions on each of these topics. Some examples will serve to illustrate the point.

Project location, finance and staffing were subjects on the agendas of two special meetings held in May 1980 between representatives of Bedeburgh's Social Services Department and Charity X. Attendance at these meeting was not confined to the persons mentioned above. The U.K. Director of Charity X initiated the first meeting and one of Charity X's Assistant Directors also attended the meeting. Similarly, Bedeburgh's Social Services Director and one of his Assistant Directors were also present. The first part of the meeting was restricted to a discussion between the two directors. The second meeting was the responsibility of the two Assistant Directors of Charity X and Bedeburgh. Whilst the Principal Officers for Day Care attended both meetings, the project director was only included in the first meeting. The Area Controller for Social Services in New Town was not involved in either meeting. The significance of these meetings and the reason for elaborating on those attending is that it was at the second meeting that the decision to change the location of the project was formally made. In addition strategic amendments to finance and staffing procedures were agreed at these meetings. Finally it was proposed that, as an interim arrangement, the Assistant Director in Bedeburgh's Social Services Department would act as a link person for that department in any consultations on the project.

It is not surprising that two bureaucracies should have had recourse to higher levels of authority when there were difficulties in reaching decisions through the agreed channels. There is some evidence, though, that the agreed liaison arrangements were not being taken advantage of even earlier in the planning of the project. In his submission to his Social Services Committee, dated 17th January 1980, Bedeburgh's Social Services Director pointed to the fact that the scheme should involve the local authority in no expense (38). This was in

contrast to the kind of commitment that Charity X seemed to have been expecting at the time. It was not indeed until 28th March 1980 that Charity X's Principal Officer for Day Care was informed by his opposite number in Bedeburgh that Bedeburgh could not keep to its original funding commitment (39).

Efficient mechanisms for co-ordination may be valuable in co-ordinating activities between organisations. The examples here, however, illustrate the commonsense point that an account of the formal mechanisms for collaboration between agencies does not provide an adequate picture of all aspects of communication between agencies. Some doubt is raised against the contention that the existence of formal mechanisms of co-ordination are a significant factor in maintaining collaboration. Rather, it would seem worthwhile exploring the extent to which efficient formal mechanisms account for significant contacts that occur between agencies.

Understanding collaboration

To summarise the discussion so far, the analysis of collaboration between Bedeburgh and Charity X has focussed on three variables which were: shared objectives, complementary resources and efficient co-ordinating mechanisms.

In this case study the general objective of meeting need was apparently shared by the agencies but the interpretations placed on this objective by personnel within each agency differed substantially. It has, therefore, been argued that shared objectives were more apparent than fact. Further, the nature of the funding of the project suggests that the two agencies did not have complementary resources. It could be

argued, for example, that Charity X could have established a similar project in the north through its own efforts, perhaps by one of its local branches making an application for S.T.E.P. funding. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that when the planned co-ordination procedures between the agencies proved unworkable then the agencies were able to adopt quite different methods of collaboration. The points can perhaps best be supported by the comment of the project director that in the early months of the project he became more and more uncertain about why the project was being established and who had ultimate responsibility for it.

Exactly why the collaboration between the two agencies continued in the face of disagreement and disappointment was not explored in detail with relevant staff in the two agencies; but relevant variables appeared to be dislike of withdrawing from an agreement and fear of losing some credibility if the plans were not implemented once the project had been publicised in the local papers.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to draw attention to the variety of objectives the collaborating agencies had for the project, the adjustments that were made to meet financial setbacks and the course of negotiations between the agencies. These perhaps help to illustrate the complexities of inter-organisational life and how commitment to collaboration can influence the outcome of that collaboration, over issues of finance and staffing, for example. Interestingly these also challenge Reid's pessimism about the conditions under which some form of collaborative relationship can be maintained. Arguably the goals of collaboration were not fully achieved here but the two agencies were still working together.

The next chapter looks beyond the immediate impact of the process of collaboration to the influence of current policy and practice on the development of the day care project.

CHAPTER 5

"THE BEST LAID PLANS - A LITERATURE REVIEW OF SOME ISSUES IN DAY CARE"

"The best laid schemes of mice an' men
Gang of a-gley"
(Robert Burns 1759 - 1796 "To a mouse")

The preceding chapter discussed the process of collaboration between Bedeburgh and Charity X in establishing the project. The adequacy of an exchange model for fully explaining the relationship between the two agencies was challenged. Some ways in which the process of collaboration itself served to modify plans for the project were noted also. One example was the expectations over staffing and the acceptance of changed arrangements. Thus Bedeburgh continued with the project after it became known that Charity X would not fund the nursery nurse posts, only the project director's post. More striking, Charity X accepted Bedeburgh 's failure to allocate any permanent posts to the project staff complement.

This chapter looks at the outcome of collaboration focussing on some key features of the plans for the project as agreed between the agencies. On the evidence of his research team's extensive studies, Bruner has argued that : "What happens later in a nursery is very much affected by the original plan....."(1). The exercise undertaken here is essentially a re-evaluation of some original plans for this project in the light of more recent trends and evidence as well as earlier research.

The intentions of the project planners were encapsulated in the name adopted for the project by the management committee, "Home from

Home". Some fixed ingredients of offering a "home from home" were that the children would be looked after in small groups, in two houses on the same estate as their own homes and that their parents and other residents would be invited to share in their care. How these plans came to fruition in the first year of the project is the substance of the next chapter where it is possible also to take some account of the impact of other variables, such as actual staff changes. This chapter attempts rather to isolate these aspects of the project plans and draw out some implications for the day care service offered.

Small group care

The kind of care offered by the project cannot be equated directly with that offered by childminders, day nurseries or nursery classes, yet experience from these settings may have some relevance. The studies which have been critical of the care offered by childminders suggest that, whilst caring for a small number of children is likely to be a necessary condition for offering homelike care it cannot be a sufficient condition. Mayall and Petrie's study of childminding has been regarded as controversial on a number of counts (2) but it does serve to highlight the fact that good child to adult ratios are not necessarily associated with high quality child care. They describe children spending a :

> "....low level under-stimulated day, in unchanging often cramped surroundings. Many did not get the love and attention they needed....Most of the mothers were not satisfied with the standard of care offered." (3)

This conclusion is supported by the guidelines derived from Alison Clarke-Stewart's wide ranging review of research in day care :

> "The caregiver is the most important aspect of day care. The caregiver-child ratio is not as important as the kinds of behaviour the caregiver exhibits. Behaviour that indicates high quality includes active involvement by talking, teaching and playing; providing interesting materials; responding to the child's interest, advances and questions; positive encouragement and suggestions; no demands, threats or punishment. Although the caregiver is actively involved, she also permits the child freedom, initiative and exploration; she is not restrictive or critical. High-quality caregiving in a day-care home or centre is not indicated by an abundance of physical affection, constant praise or strict discipline."(4)

These guidelines suggest a wealth of requirements beyond those of staffing ratios in offering good quality day care. The focus is shifted away from numbers to the skills involved in caring for children. If it is assumed that both good child to adult ratios and high quality standards of care are present, will the objective of homelike care then necessarily be achieved? Some evidence derived from the Oxford research studies suggests not:

> "There is no reason to believe that minding somebody else's children on a regular basis is the same sort of activity as looking after one's own children in one's own home.....An extension of domesticity to other people's children under your own roof does not necessarily provide the child with a psychological home. And if a child is having troubles at home, the minder is by no means a natural substitute for, or compensation for, what he feels he is missing at home." (5)

These observations raise some doubts as to the practicability of reproducing the pattern of relationships that the child experiences at

home, of offering the precise combination of elements that comprise "home".

The two houses

The accommodation for the project was two, identical, adjacent terraced houses. The floor plan of the houses is contained in the appendices. Briefly, the accommodation in each house comprised: on the ground floor, a kitchen, cloakroom with W.C., cupboard, hallway, living/dining room; and on the first floor, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a cupboard. Before the accommodation could be registered for day care by the Social Services Department some minor modifications were required. In order to meet the fire regulations, fire doors were installed. For safety reasons equipment such as stair guards were purchased. These modifications were minor and in most respects the interior of the project houses remained identical to others on the estate.

The project houses would be homelike insofar as they offered the same physical design as the houses in which many of the children lived, and in the stated intention to furnish them as ordinary homes. But only a minority of homes will have between four and six adults responsible for, at any one time, six children. The demands on the physical fabric of the house made by this number of persons are rather different from those made by four or five person families for whom the houses were designed. These factors alone undermine the idea of the project houses seeming like home.

There are, however, other ways in which the use of estate houses may have an impact on day care provision. From the local authority

standpoint, for example, a favourable factor was the comparative cheapness of the accommodation. Bedeburgh had planned to build a second day nursery in the south of New Town but local authority expenditure cuts had prohibited the necessary capital outlay. The use of two existing houses involved no capital expenditure and offered the possibility that this day care facility could be closed if demand dropped and a similar facility opened where demand was greater. Thus the use of the houses for the project was seen as a cheaper and more flexible option for the local authority than purpose built accommodation. If the experiment were regarded as a success, one outcome of using estate houses for day care, then, might be more day care provision for the residents of New Town.

Also worth considering are the ways in which the choice of accommodation might influence the organisation and work of the project. First, there are some illustrative points in the literature about the ways in which an adult environment influences the activities of pre-school children. An ordinary house is designed for the use of adults, door handles are at adult height as are light switches. These and other design features may provide safety for children but they also provide constraints. They can impede children in their pursuits. Van der Eyken observed some advantages of a purpose built nursery:

> "The nursery is "purpose-built".....Consequently it has the kind of child-centred architecture that all good schools should have, with wash basins of the right height,....simple access from the playrooms to the play area outside and large windows that allow plenty of light. It could still be better: there are heavy swing doors in the corridor that challenge the strongest five year old. They keep out draughts and children at one and the same time."(6)

One issue, then, is to what extent the advantages of an adult, homelike environment are offset by the ways that such an environment may limit the freedom of movement of the children.

For, secondly, there is some evidence in the literature as to how the amount, and kind, of space available to children influences their play activities.

Prescriptive accounts of how pre-school children should spend their time often stresses the value of space and privacy:

> "....space, the opportunity for imaginative play, the intelligent provision of suitable toys, the facilities for movement and stimulus, are not merely desirable at the pre-school stage, they are essential."(7)

This account by Van der Eyken goes on to discuss ways in which that space and privacy are used by children:

> "[In a]" secret hideaway", a store room.....in which children may seek a refuge from the teachers and helpers in the school.....Two boys might work out a secret trap for one of their friends, or a single child, wishing to be alone and undisturbed, may find a haven there."(8)

Research results from the Oxfordshire studies have confirmed and extended Van der Eyken's observations. They include comment on the value for children of certain spatial arrangements. Quiet, den areas were observed to encourage richer dialogue amongst children. Such

> "...dialogue inducing settings are small rooms, with two or three children in them, and furnished like a

> home rather than a school. In our observations some of the richest conversations took place in the home corner, or in "dens" which two or three children constructed on their own by, for instance, dropping curtains over chairs or planks and crawling in the dark, enclosed space inside. Rich dialogue may require quiet, intimate settings....." (9)

These researchers have suggested that certain kinds of space can promote enjoyable and developmental activities for children. Other studies have pointed to the influence of the whole architectural design of pre-school facilities. Ferri et al. in their study of combined centres show that children in one centre were more frequently seen to be wandering aimlessly, unoccupied by specific activity (10). The researchers point out that the design of the particular centre was such that children could easily "get lost". The influence of architectural design on child behaviour is further indicated by the findings of St. J. Neill and E. Denham that the use of open plan classrooms in nursery provision leads to high noise levels, boisterous activity and unproductive relations between adults and children (11).

The research quoted above is about the behaviour of children of children in roomy spaces; there is also some evidence about the effects of limited space. Alison Clarke-Stewart cites findings of an American research study that shows that where space per individual child is less than 25 square feet, children become aggressive towards each other and more destructive with their toys (12).

These findings point to some of the ways in which the amount and layout of play space influences the activities and experiences of children in day care provision and to some of the advantages and disadvantages in different designs.

Thirdly, there is evidence to support the commonsense idea that where there is sufficient space for a mothers' or parents' room, parents are encouraged to spend time at a nursery and to become involved in social activities associated with the nursery. Thus Ferri at al. note that in the combined centres they studied, only two had a parents' room and where there was no such room, regular activities involving more than a few parents were restricted (13).

The existence of a parents' room cannot guarantee parental involvement in any way but a parent or caretaker does have to be involved in the nursery to the extent of delivering a child to the nursery. Ferri's findings suggest the nursery entrance and layout of the cloakroom area can influence staff/parent contact.(14) If the parents have to enter or cross an activity area with their child in order to hang up their outdoor clothes, then there is some opportunity for casual conversation or observation of play activities.

Whether or not the decision to house the project in two estate houses furthered the objective of offering homelike care it may well have had implications for the degree of freedom of activity the children enjoyed, the type of play they engaged in and on the degree to which parents became involved.

Shared care

The objective of involving parents in childcare has impeccable roots. Over sixty years ago Margaret McMillan was arguing that :

> "The nursery school should be close to the homes, in this way we get nearer to what is best in the good

> private nursery - the nearness to the mothers who should if possible be near her children and able to see them often. A nursery school should be part of home life.....Every nursery should have its Mother's Club. Ours is held weekly. The mothers join so as to be part of a new movement that has already changed in some degree their own lives and the future of their children....." (15)

And more recently the advantages of parental involvement in pre-school care have been stressed in many quarters. For diverse reasons it is a notion that has received the support of policymakers (16), practitioners in pre-school care particularly in the playgroup movement (17), and researchers in the field (18).

To return to the objectives of the project in offering a "home from home", assessing the significance of parental and community involvement is difficult because of the many forms such involvement can take. Elucidation is particularly problematic with regard to parental involvement. For example, parents may become involved in day care in order to exert community or consumer control over that provision. Alternatively, the impetus for parental involvement may come from the day care staff who intend to educate parents in child care practice or, less specifically, to encourage them to face up to the tasks of parenthood. These two alternatives are evident in pre-school care generally. The Pre-School Playgroup Association provides the most significant example of the philosophy that parents should be active in the provision of pre-school care. Whilst an example of parents receiving help and support in the care of pre-school children can again be drawn from the Oxfordshire studies. Garland and White refer to the staff's philosophy of caring for parents at Vienna Close:

"Our work should be involving the parents rather than excluding them or removing the children from them, and our method of treating them should be via relationship.". (19)

A third possibility is that parents are seen neither as managing the day care provision nor as in need of guidance but rather as an extra pair of hands in providing the service. But there are differing interpretations of what even this may mean. Teresa Smith has discussed a range of possibilities:

"1. Working with the children on "educational activities" - that is, with little apparent difference between the "professional teacher" and the "parent as teacher". This seems to be the crucial factor in the studies of early intervention in the home.
2. Working in the group "doing the chores" - putting out the equipment, clearing up, making the tea, mixing paints, and cutting up paper (what is known in many primary schools as "tying shoe-laces and wiping noses".)
3. Servicing the group but not actually working in the group alongside the children - making and mending equipment, fund raising, helping with outings and the annual Christmas party.
4. A "miscellaneous category" of factors to do with the "openess" of the group: parents visiting the group before the child starts; staying to settle the child; visiting to discuss problems with the staff; visiting for special events; parents dropping in casually to see what is going on in the group.
5. Involvement in management." (20)

So far it has been presumed that parents will want to be involved (whatever form it takes) but this is not necessarily the case. The

results of an O.P.C.S. survey in 1974 of mothers' views showed that:

> 41% of all the children and 33% of those in day care, had mothers who enjoyed or would enjoy participation. Many children in day care had mothers who did not wish to participate and even amongst those with mothers who did help only about half (47%) had mothers who said they liked doing so. Participation was wanted for many less (19%) of the children whose mothers never stayed. In fact for the overwhelming majority of mothers welcomed the respite from the child provided by day care." (21)

Evidence about actual levels of parental involvement strengthen the indication by O.P.C.S. that parents (generally mothers) may not welcome involvement. Woodhead has argued that:

> "It is difficult to establish in practice the extent of parent participation in various forms of pre-school provision in the UK not least because of the vagueness of the concept. The best national indicators come from the longitudinal Child Health and Education Study based on a national sample of all children born during one week in 1970 (Osborn et al 1984). Amongst mothers of playgroup children, 43.7% reported taking part or helping with the playgroup at least once a term and 24.35% at least once a month. This is not surprising in view of the different basis of calculation, but it does suggest that playgroups are only going part way towards putting the principle of active involvement into practice. Interestingly, there are strong regional variations on this measure (from the highest, Scotland with 69.2% to the lowest, North with 34.2%). At the same time, these figures are very much higher than for any other form of provision.

> 13% mothers of children in nursery schools or classes reported helping at least once a term, 6.3% at least once a month. Levels of involvement in day nurseries were even lower. Accordingly, any evidence linking parent involvement with long term effectiveness could have important repurcussions for existing practices." (22)

In the light of this evidence about actual involvement, what factors foster parental involvement? Bruner's findings suggest that such participation perhaps needs to be purposeful. He argues that the nature and extent to which parents will in fact participate depends on the system of accountability for any provision. Where centres are primarily run by professional staff, even when parents are involved in management meetings, they are likely to lack confidence and staff are likely to feel that parents do not appreciate the practical issues in running a nursery. Where parents have policymaking power and are actively involved in running a centre, then they are likely to be lively participants. (23)

Purposeful participation cannot be encouraged if parents do not chose to use day care facilities at all. Yet even this choice has some relevance for a day care facility that seeks to encourage parental and community involvement. Another issue here is about which parents may not opt to use day care provision. Bronfenbrenner's studies led him to conclude that it may be the most deprived parents who do not participate. (24) Whilst Shinman's study of parental use of pre-school facilities enabled her to derive an index of maternal alienation to predict those "isolated, over-stressed mothers" who were unlikely to make use of pre-school facilities. Shinman's main policy and practice recommendations focussed on how to reach such vulnerable mothers.(25)

Parental participation involves the day care staff as well as the parents. Yet there is some reason to believe that whilst staff may welcome the principle of parental involvement, there may be difficulties in implementing that principle. What strategies do day care facilities adopt in attempting to involve parents? A common approach is for one room to be designated as parents' (or realistically mothers') room. Here mothers can meet to chat, smoke, drink coffee or whatever they wish to do. This strategy does not necessarily involve the parents further in the organisation of the provision; the nursery or other day care facility is offering a social service, designed perhaps to alleviate tensions at home. Where more active parental involvement in sessions occurs, Ferri at al. note a variety of staff reactions:

> ".....85% of all the staff interviewed favoured such parental participation, although more than half of them expressed some reservations about its practicability." (26)

The researchers argued that one source of concern for staff was about how to relate to the parents whilst working with their children, especially where parents were regarded as unco-operative. Ferri et al. conclude:

> "Working in co-operation with parents, guiding their activities and offering much needed understanding and support, is a task requiring considerable skill and training, which many of the staff interviewed felt that they lacked. It would seem that careful preparation for this role is needed among the staff in all types of nursery if the concept of parental involvement is to become more of a reality and less of a myth." (27)

These comments on likely difficulties in achieving increased parental involvement are re-inforced by Garland and White's observation that in some nurseries staff are concerned to prove superior competence to the parent in child care. (28) Sharing a child with its mother was observed to present problems - the nursery staff in one instance effectively sabotaged one mother's attempt to continue breastfeeding her child by bottle feeding the child prior to the mother's arrival. (29)

What the discussion about parental involvement so far suggests is that such involvement can take many forms, that parents may not necessarily welcome involvement, that perhaps under half of mothers would actually participate, that parents might offer a more confident contribution if they had some power to control events in the day care centre, that certain disadvantaged parents would be unlikely even to be able to use the facility effectively for their children and, finally, that staff attitudes and skills regarding parental involvement deserve careful consideration.

The parents of children in day care have a particular stake in the provision but in what sense can that involvement be extended to the whole community? The Oxfordshire studies suggest that there are advantages for both staff and children in there being links with the local community. Day nurseries, in particular, are very often isolated from the area served:

> "We were frequently struck by how isolated the day nurseries were. Just as mothers caring for their children at home can find the demands of day to day care time consuming and physically constraining so can the staff of the day nurseries. The clearest case of this was at the university nursery where the

> staff found themselves isolated high up in a tower block in a neighbourhood about which they knew very little and where they had no links with schools or local people....."(30)

If the experience of working in isolation from the community is unpleasant for staff, it has drawbacks also for the nature of the contacts between staff and children. Wood, McMahon and Cranstoun show how a staff member's local knowledge can enrich conversation between her and the children at a local nursery. (31)

Various models for community involvement are evident in the literature. Where staff and children live in the same locality, issues of staff isolation and ignorance of a child's social life do not arise. Runneymede provides one example in the Oxfordshire research:

> "This was the only day nursery which really arose out of local need and the community in the shape of parents, still retained control over how the nursery was run....." (32)

Runneymede does not provide the only model for community involvement. Garland and White also cite Church Rd. state day nursery as being community based, NOT in the sense that it was run by the community but because it fostered links with the local community and ran social activities for parents and staff. A third model is for a nursery to be set up by a charity or local authority with the objective of involving parents and local community representatives in its management. In this case the management committee will have to report to the funding agency and the local community representatives. Bruner notes that this dual accountability - precisely that established in the case study project -

presents difficulties particularly over the handling of sensitive issues.

As far as this project is concerned the notion of community involvement poses several questions for consideration; for example, what is meant by a link with the community? How will community involvement be linked to accountability to the funding agency?

This chapter has looked at some of the general objectives of the day care experiment and tested them out in relation to some findings in the research and practice literature. The trend of the argument has been that the apparently straightforward goals of offering homelike care, by caring for small groups of children in surroundings similar to their own homes and with the involvement of their parents and other local residents, may be impracticable or even inappropriate ones. The next chapter will discuss how the case study project objectives actually came to fruition in the first year.

CHAPTER 6

"ROUTINE REALITIES"

The focus of this chapter is the work of the project during its first year. So far the thesis has described in some detail the plans agreed by the sponsors for the day care project, has set these plans in the context of social policy developments and has examined them in the light of some research and policy findings. What remains is to explore how these plans came to fruition.

As Chapter 4 shows, the main features of the project were agreed by the headquarters staff of the sponsoring agencies, with the project director influencing some aspects, notably location, following his appointment. The outcome of the collaboration between the agencies would depend in part on the objectives set for the project and the physical provisions made. These offered certain opportunities and constraints within which those associated with the project would operate. The ways that plans and policies are realised in practice depends also on the interpretations and decisions made by those who implement the plans and these in turn are influenced by the reactions of those who use the service. The project was not created by the sponsoring agencies in isolation, but through the mediation of the project staff, the parents and the children themselves. This chapter will discuss the role played by each of these groups in shaping the everyday reality of the project.

The principle questions raised by the early planning of the project and unresolved at the time the project opened were as follows:

a) To what extent would a community or professional perspective dominate in the project. For example, how would families using it influence the work of the project? (Chapter 4)

b) What criteria would be employed in the selection of children for the project. Would the project include only very disadvantaged children, a more "balanced" intake or simply those children who came to the notice of project staff by whatever means? (Chapter 4)

c) What role would parents of children in the project play. Would they be in receipt of some form of service, whether training in child care or social work guidance, or, would they undertake some project staff roles? (Chapter 4)

d) How was the funding of the project in its first year, largely via M.S.C. monies, going to influence the work of the project? (Chapter4)

e) How were the two sponsoring agencies, Bedeburgh and Charity X, going to collaborate over the running of the project? (Chapter 4)

f) Could it be said that the project was reproducing a "home from home" for the children ? (Chapter 5)

The Professionals?

The first unresolved issue posed above was to what extent a community or professional perspective would dominate in the project, how would families using the project influence its work. It is suggested here that in practice both the families AND the professionals, each working to further their own perceived interests, contributed to the approaches adopted by the project. The work of the project reflected a

complex web of intention and action. Thus there was some conflict of demands made by the sponsoring agencies in contrast to those made by the users of the project; and the project director often played a pivotal role in attempting to reconcile the demands of his employers and those of local residents:

> "I have to show Charity X that the service is for the disadvantaged but at the same time I want the village to feel that the project is theirs and it is not stigmatised. I try and build bridges - tell the sponsors that we have problem kids here and the parents that the project is not solely concerned with problem kids."(I)

The different demands made by the local parents and professional sponsors, including those introduced by the project director himself, were further highlighted in a report prepared by the project director:

> "....the project is and has to provide a comprehensive service to children and families in the village.....We offer an "open door" to everyone in the community, but especially to families with children under 5. We attempt to maximise the potential of all children who attend. We deal with special needs as defined by parents, staff or outside professionals but always in conjunction with parents. The project director, parents and key staff members identify areas of "work" - target areas for children and parents. These are reviewed every three months with a view to children who reach targets being moved to other provisions or returning home full time. We attempt to use the least time possible to achieve our overall goals with each child as this allows us to offer a wider service." (2)

This extract illustrates quite clearly the two facets of the project work. On the one hand the project was offering an "open door to everyone in the community" and always worked in "conjunction with parents". On the other hand, this community service was described as being characterised by work on "special needs". A professional problem solving approach is suggested by the intention that "children who reach targets [can be] moved to other provisions [or return] home full time". The aim was apparently to "achieve overall goals with each child". The implication was that the project was not providing a custodial or childminding service for the community because, for example, mothers may have desired a break from routines of child care - but offering a more specialised service. Certainly this latter theme was frequently stressed by the project director in meetings with sponsors, staff and parents.

Project staff also were aware of their differing and perhaps conflicting tasks. Very early on in the life of the project, one staff member commented that she felt the project had two sets of objectives. The first, the public set of objectives, was simply that it was a nursery for children. Parents in the area welcomed the facility, particularly as childminding charges were notably higher than the very modest fee charged by the nursery. This member of staff felt that mothers were unaware of what she regarded as the private objective of the project, that of screening children for problems which would either be dealt with in the project or referred to specialist agencies.

As the project developed, the so-called private objective, that of screening children, became less private. Parents were present at review meetings held about their children and problems which the staff had identified could be discussed then. At the management committee

meetings at which parents were represented, the issue of screening children was raised on several occasions. Nonetheless there remained other evidence that staff experienced ambiguities in their role - on the one hand offering an open, day care service, and on the other taking care that children were meeting certain standards of development and behaviour and noting any problems in the child or its family. Towards the end of the first year, another staff member made her assessment : "The project director stresses that it is not a nursery for children with problems - yet once kids are in the nursery we are all expected to identify and work on problems."

Furthermore, during the year, several mothers expressed their awareness that there was an element of assessment in the project's work. They did not express concern about this on their own behalf, but several thought that it provoked anxiety for other mothers. The view repeated by several parents was: "At the first meeting [the project director] said that kids would not be assessed. I realised then they would be." Or, in the words of another mother, "Whilst kids are assessed and an attempt made to deal with problems, it is not a condition that your child should have problems."

It was evident, then, that different groups associated with the project had different objectives for it and that some of these were incompatible. The relative influence of the different groups in promoting their own objectives can be explored by focussing on key decisions in the organisation of the project. The three decisions examined here are whose decisions were influential in selecting children for the project; who influenced the length of time that children remained in the project and whose decisions governed how children spent their days at the project.

During the first year it was the case that allocation of places was according to parental criteria in the sense that places in the project were offered to the children of parents who asked for places on a "first come, first served" basis. In some instances a health visitor or other official had mentioned the project to the mother but the project director only offered a place following an initiative or request directly by a parent or guardian. However, once attention is shifted away from decisions about which children should attend the project on to how long they should attend, then parental influence appeared (at least in the first year) to diminish.

Any child whose parent(s) requested a place was offered some sessions at the project as a place became available. Once the child joined the project, however, there was a form of assessment made by the staff of the child's situation. This was made in one or more of the following ways: through observation of the child's behaviour, the application of standard child development tests and/or through knowledge of the home circumstances and parental feelings. According to the outcome of this assessment, and according to available resources, the project would make a judgement as to the amount of time each week the child should spend at the project and any particular help he or she was deemed to require. Decisions on these issues were reviewed at intervals at meetings attended by the project director, the parents and staff member who had particular responsibility for the child.

The project director, with his staff, took the lead in deciding what amount of time the children should spend at the project but there was a procedure for negotiating the decision with parents. The possibility of conflicting interests between the parents and the project staff arose as parents had particular and personal plans for their

children including attendance at the project. The project director, on the other hand, had to justify the resources made available to the project to show that these were being offered as widely as possible to children whom the sponsors deemed would benefit from the service.

Two examples suggest that whilst the project staff expressed concern that parents should be fully involved in decisions about their children, parents' perceptions were that the authority for these decisions lay with the project director. Clearly if parents controlled the project, then it would be expected that parents would remove their children when they required the service no longer. In practice no child stayed at the project longer than the parents wished. But, during the first year of the project's life, the question arose as to whether children could remain at the project as long as the parents wished. During this year it was unclear what the pressure of demand for places might be or how long children might stay at the project if no pressure was exerted for them to leave. At an early management committee meeting the mothers present were beginning to express the view that, whilst they had regarded the project as an ordinary nursery, they now believed that their children were being assessed and, if judged to be developing normally, were allocated fewer sessions. Children allocated full time places after their reviews were those judged in some way to be disadvantaged.

The second example is the observed behaviour of parents before a review meeting where decisions about placements were made:

> "I had thought that after the first three months Dick would have to leave. I was pleased to gain another three months of two mornings." (Mother speaking)

And a staff member remarked on the tactics adopted by another mother:

> "Bob's review is coming up. His Mum always reverts Bob to a baby before a review. He has a dummy, is put in his pram, and yet he is growing up."

The evidence of the first year suggests that most children continued to attend the project for as long as their parents wished them to do so. Nevertheless, the parents did not feel that they controlled this decision. Their perception was that the project director controlled the discussion at the review meeting when decisions about attendance were agreed. It was evident that parents were not always content about the amount of time in any week that children spent at the project. Several mothers expressed a wish either for more sessions per week for their child or a different spacing of the sessions offered. A child who attended sessions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays was, her mother explained, reluctant to go on Monday mornings after a break of several days.

It was the sponsors and their staff who offered the services of the project to parents and children. Their initiative in providing the service was reflected, at least in the first year, in parents' perceptions of where control lay with regard to time spent at the project.

The introductory chapter described a typical day for the children at the project. Who decided on that routine? Observation during the first year suggested that whilst certain features of the timetable were dictated by the project director, in the main, the daily routine was agreed amongst the staff themselves every morning. In discussions with the researcher, the staff argued that this was the most practicable

style of planning. Planning ahead, it was said, was impeded by not knowing how many children would arrive for any one session, what moods they would be in, or whether the weather would allow an outing. Parents had little control over or even contact with the daily programme.

To sum up, observation of the project during the first year suggested that initiatives in running the project were in the hands of the project director and his staff. At the same time, the project director strove to learn about and to meet parents' demands. In one report, for example, the project director was critical (on this particular issue) of social services day nurseries and educational nursery classes:

> "The missing factor....is the parents' demands; what do they require, how best to achieve this requirement, to in fact allow them to determine their own provision while acting as educator in raising their capacity, confidence and expectations. To be flexible to wide ranging demands, to make no judgements and set no priorities on admissions. To allow parents to identify areas of concern."

In contrast the same report stressed that in this project :

> "Parents must also be involved with other parents and other children [though] to look for commitment from all parents is not only foolish but dangerous, as it shows a sense of unreality with regard to the lifestyles of our customers." (3)

These latter comments reflect the organisational basis of the project during its first year.

The children who came to the project

As has been noted already, following the debate about allocation of places in the project, the practice emerged of offering places to those local children whose parents requested a place. Given the system for allocating places, and given the small numbers involved, it is not possible to classify the characteristics of children who attended the project during the first year. The nearest to a common description that might be applied to the 37 children discussed by staff and parents with the researcher, is that the majority came from families where, for some reason, the parents felt hard pressed. This was because only one parent was caring for the children, because there were other young children to care for and the parents were always tired, because one parent was seriously ill, because there were serious financial problems and debts or because the child presented behaviour difficulties that were hard to cope with. These various problems do not imply that any individual child was necessarily ill-cared for. It did mean that the parents felt they were under some stress and that they would benefit from some help with child care.

By the middle of the second year of operation, the project director felt that the children whose parents were requesting places at the project were, in his judgement, increasingly disadvantaged. In this sense, local demand and professional criteria about disadvantage were merging. There were various reasons for this. Perhaps most important was that the local housing department had gradually come to use Badbury estate for rehousing what were regarded as problem families. Also the range of options for the care of the under fives had increased with the opening of a new nursery class on the estate. This relieved the project of some requests for child care from parents who were simply seeking

some outside stimulation or education for their children and whose work or domestic commitments did not preclude them from using the very short nursery class sessions.

Parental participation

When the project was planned parental involvement was a key element in the discussions. One way that parents were to be involved was for them to provide some positive help for the project. In particular, some parents who had brought up their own children might become parent helps on the project staff. Two of the parent helps who remained a full year on the project staff were local mothers. They were not, however, mothers of children who had places in the project. The other two parent helps lived outside the area.

What role did the mothers and fathers of the participating children play in the work of the project? Some parents, usually mothers, often came into the houses for a cup of coffee and a chat at the beginning of the session and at the end of sessions some might go upstairs to see what their children had been doing. Parents participated in the review meetings when their children's future at the project was discussed and they had access, if they so wished, to any report written about their children. Parents were represented on the management committee and during the first year organised a jumble sale and ran a stall at a local fete. They also organised a project outing to a wildlife park. At times of staff illness, parents occasionally helped in the project houses, caring for children or helping with the housekeeping. Finally, the project director felt that, although most parents simply accepted what the project offered, some contributed ideas which influenced his organisation of the project.

How parental involvement is implemented must depend in part on what staff and parents understand and wish it to imply. Certainly the staff expressed opinions as to the feasible extent of parental involvement. Several of them pointed out that there was not enough space in the house for mothers to spend all day at the project; the presence of mothers limited the physical space for children's activities. This was evident when meetings which mothers attended were held during the day. Children in the house where the meeting was being held were transferred temporarily to the other house, where their numbers were further swelled by any additional children the mothers had brought with them. In general it would seem that whilst staff welcomed the opportunity to meet and get to know mothers as they felt this was beneficial for the care of the children, they preferred such contact to occur at the beginning or end of the session, as was almost always the case.

As far as the parents were concerned, they generally welcomed the fact that the project door was not shut in their faces. Even when they felt that they had not been adequately informed about their child's activities, they knew that they could go upstairs and see what their child had been doing. Nevertheless, parents were aware of unstated limitations on their daily involvement with the project and/or wished themselves to limit their involvement. Thus, like the staff, mothers were aware of constraints of space and felt that they were in the way if they stayed too long. One mother, whose child was unsettled, made this clear. She would have liked to have dropped into the project in the middle of a session to see what her child was doing, but felt that the staff would not welcome her.

Parents limited their involvement in the project for two main reasons. First, some argued that their child's attendance at the

project provided a break for themselves when they could recharge their energies in preparation for devoting their attention to the child when he or she was at home. One parent with a demanding child felt that the project had "given her her life back". Secondly, parents who had other children or commitments, could not become involved with the project by offering help during sessions. If they brought other children with them, especially very young children, they had to be cared for and this limited their ability to organise and play with the project children.

It follows from all this that some parents get more involved than others. Those that were members of the management committee or instrumental in organising outings may have gained some satisfaction from their activities but they also felt sometimes that they did all the work. Conversely, parents who were not involved sometimes felt left out of the group who knew what was happening. These parents sometimes argued that this was a reason for less parental involvement and for decisions to be made by the staff.

Resourced or resourceful?

The arrangements for financing the project were described in Chapter 4. It was noted that the main source of finance for the project in its first year was not to be the sponsoring agencies but funding from the M.S.C. via their temporary employment programmes. The employment schemes being operated by the M.S.C. were, at the time the project opened, the Special Temporary Employment Programme (S.T.E.P.) and, later in the year, the Community Enterprise Programme (C.E.P.) All staff posts with the exception of that of project director were M.S.C. funded posts. In addition to the salaries for the posts, the M.S.C. made a

payment of £350 for each post filled (at 1980 rates). These additional monies were to assist in the development of the project.

The salary of the project director was paid by Charity X and the charity also made a further contribution to the project of £1,432. Bedeburgh, for its contribution, made two ex gratia payments to the project funds of £200 and £1,000 respectively. These contributions were each made, relatively unexpectedly from the project director's point of view, when project funds were low. A not insignificant additional contribution to the resources of the project was that made partly in cash, partly in kind, by parents, staff and outside donors. Through a jumble sale, tombola stall, coffee evenings and the like, parents contributed to a social fund to enable some extra outings and expeditions for children and parents. A local television network made a donation of money for the purchase of toys for the project. Help in kind came in various forms. A local carpet shop donated samples of carpeting which, given over a period of months, were eventually sufficient to carpet both houses. The staff gave their labour in fitting carpets and decorating the houses. One parent donated a sofa when she bought a new one. Another family, about to emigrate, donated many of their children's toys. Staff took washing home from the project and subsidised necessary trips to buy or collect equipment by not claiming petrol money.

At the beginning of the year the project houses were poorly decorated, the kitchens ill-equipped, much of the furniture in a state of disrepair, the carpets threadbare and dirty and there were insufficient books and mainly broken toys for the children. A number of parents commented on their surprise at the poor standard of the physical provision in the early days of the project. By the end of the

first year, the houses were re-decorated and adequately furnished and equipped. There was a more plentiful supply of toys and books for the children.

The methods of funding and equipping the project provoked uncertainty for the project director and his staff. Arrangements for the administration of the M.S.C. money were found to be particularly irksome. Bedeburgh administered the M.S.C. funding on behalf of the project. The authority also assisted the administration of the project in many other ways, for example by allowing the project staff to order dry goods through the authority's bulk buy scheme. These arrangements, whereby in effect the project received its finance secondhand, caused various misunderstandings and problems. For example, at the beginning of the first year, the project director was unclear as to whether Bedeburgh was using the additional M.S.C. monies to pay for the bulk orders or whether the authority was financing the goods from its own budget as an additional resource for the project. It was not until December 1980 that it became clear that the M.S.C. monies were being used to pay for the bulk orders and that these orders would cease once the extra M.S.C. monies were spent.

The M.S.C. finance was the source of another uncertainty in the organisation of the project - how long the staff would remain with the project. In the first instance the sponsors were informed that the completion of all S.T.E.P./C.E.P. staff contracts (that is of all staff excepting the project director) would be twelve months from the time when the first members of staff were employed. Thus, as not all members of staff started work at the same time, some staff contracts would have been for only ten, and others eight, months. One concern expressed about this arrangement was that if staff left during the year, a

replacement might be employed for only three or four months. However, in the April after the project opened, it became known that each S.T.E.P./C.E.P. worker would be given a twelve month contract starting from the first day of work. Indeed the M.S.C. later allocated two keyworker appointments to the project enabling two of the nursery nurses to be appointed for a second year.

One issue raised by Charity X during the initial negotiations was the possibility of Bedeburgh allocating some permanent posts to the project. In response the arrangement devised by Bedeburgh was that there could be an exchange of two temporary posts from the project with two permanent posts allocated to the authority's day nurseries. The swap of appointments would be made once vacancies arose in the day nurseries. An attempt to organise such an exchange was made in July 1981 when one permanent nursery nurse post within the local authority became vacant.

Some of the nursery nurses from the project were interviewed for the permanent post by representatives from Bedeburgh's child care staff. The director of the project observed the interviews but, as the appointment was to be to Bedeburgh's staff complement, he was not an influential member of the panel. One of the nursery nurses from the project whose work the project director regarded highly was turned down for the post on the basis of her previous work for Bedeburgh prior to joining the project. One of the other nursery nurses, who had also made a substantial contribution to the project, was selected for the permanent post. Her C.E.P. post was then filled by another nursery nurse. The new C.E.P. worker was allocated to the day nursery where there was a vacancy thus enabling the project to retain their nursery nurse in a permanent position.

The "permanent" position at the project lasted only a few weeks. The local M.S.C. staff soon learnt of the exchange of posts, which had been arranged without any consultations with them. The M.S.C. officials decided that unless the new C.E.P. worker immediately took up her post at the project all funding for the project would cease. The following day the C.E.P. worker transferred to the project and the nursery nurse from the project transferred to the day nursery. In this way the project lost overnight one of its nursery nurses who, before her new appointment, still had some months of her original contract to run. Nor could this nursery nurse be considered for an extended keyworker post at the project as she was now in permanent employment. The new arrangement involved both members of staff in quite considerable additional travelling to their new places of work. Within a few weeks the newly appointed C.E.P. worker left the project and began to job share the permanent post at the day nursery with the project's former nursery nurse.

These events serve to illustrate in several ways how the staffing arrangements at the project ensured that the administrative and organisational requirements of the sponsoring and funding bodies took precedence over the attempts of the project to provide a child care service. First, the selection of project staff was restricted by a criterion that the M.S.C., but not the sponsors or the project director, deemed important; that is, staff could only be selected from amongst persons registered as unemployed. The project director described the situation as follows: ".....apart from being work rusty, they just begin to work to a high standard when they leave." Secondly, the project director had very little control over what was intended to be the appointment of his first permanent member of staff. As the project director pointed out, the criteria he deemed important for his staff

were not necessarily those which Bedeburgh would judge important in making an appointment to a day nursery. The need to satisfy M.S.C. requirements in order to maintain the project in existence at all meant that once the M.S.C. threatened a withdrawal of funding, there was no choice but to let the "permanent" member of staff leave. The reactions of the children she was caring for could not be taken into account, nor any adjustments her sudden departure entailed for other staff at the project.

Relations between the sponsoring agencies

In reviewing mechanisms for co-ordinating collaboration between Charity X and Bedeburgh, an earlier chapter argued that informal contacts were as important to understanding the relations between the agencies as formally agreed liaison arrangements. Collaboration can continue even when the formally agreed basis for that collaboration breaks down - as it did, for example, over the original funding for the project. Three main methods of collaboration between the sponsors were noted during the first year. A regular contact between the sponsoring agencies was at the project management committee meetings, which the principal day care officers of both Charity X and Bedeburgh attended. This meeting was not, though, primarily for the purpose of linking the sponsoring agencies but for overseeing the work of the project. The management committee meetings included also the project director and other staff, parents, local community and professional representatives as well as the day care officers. The two officers did, however, have the opportunity for informal discussion before or after the meetings. Informal telephone discussions were the second form of contact between representatives of the two sponsoring agencies. They took place if there were any changes in arrangements concerning the project, for

example, there were informal discussions over Bedeburgh's successful attempt to raise an additional £1,000 for the project. The third means of liaison was through formal meetings between the agencies of which the principal example was a review meeting held ten months after the project was opened and which was attended by assistant directors from Bedeburgh and Charity X as well as the principal officers for day care , the project director and the research worker.

The data available on the content of these various contacts would suggest that collaboration between the agencies does not rely on the fulfillment of previous agreements but rather on the continued perception and willingness of the two parties that they were collaborating. Thus in this case, as far as Charity was concerned, two undertakings which they had asked of Bedeburgh from the outset on more secure staffing and funding arrangements were not forthcoming during the first year. The failure of Bedeburgh to make an adequate arrangement for one, or more, permanent member(s) of staff to be allocated to the project has already been described. Nor, during the first year, was Bedeburgh able to guarantee any funding for the project on a continuing basis, although two ad hoc payments were made. Yet whilst little apparent progress was made in fulfilling plans that had been pursued by Charity X with Bedeburgh over some considerable time, there were signs at the formal review meeting that interest and confidence in the collaborative experiment had grown. Both parties expressed confidence that the project was meeting its intended aims and that it was a viable alternative to day nurseries. The Assistant Director explained and apologised that his authority had had difficulty in making any financial commitment to the project but was confident that his authority would not want the project to close and would give short term financial help rather than let it close. In the longer term he acknowledged the

authority would have to take responsibility for the majority funding. The review included a discussion as to whether, and how, the experiment might be broadened to include new projects of a similar type in other areas. The tenor of the meeting was very much in the spirit of an anticipated continued collaboration.

A "Home from Home" Again

The project was originally designed with the aim of offering homelike care. It became evident, however, during the first year that the project day differed in a number of ways from a routine that children would actually experience at home.

First, was the changing child population at the project. Sessional attendances, designed to accommodate individual requirements and make use of available vacancies, meant that children could be with different companions at each of the various sessions they attended. This circumstance is rather different from consistent companionship of brothers and sisters at home.

Secondly, was the number of adults at the project. There were four adults in each of the project houses, plus the director, his deputy and occasional helpers from community work schemes and school pupils on work experience weeks. A keyworker was appointed to take an especial interest in each child but children inevitably had dealings with several adults, some of whom they did not know very well.

Thirdly, was the project director's philosophy for the project of maximising the potential for each child. The director's intention was that the high staff to child ratio should be utilised to give each child

a great deal of attention and stimulation. He argued that within the security of a routine it was possible to "....put more demands in an unthreatening way on skills....in speech, craft, imagination work". This educational emphasis hinted at was made more explicit in requests by the project director to the staff that the older children should do some work, be introduced to numbers and letters.

The ways that the staff implemented the director's intentions varied. For example, in one house a staff member exploited such incidents as the sharing of an apple amongst four children to discuss numbers one to four and to introduce the concepts of halves and quarters. Another member of staff constructed games as a means of conveying concepts. Each child's body profile was traced onto large sheets of paper and these were painted and pinned onto the wall to illustrate ideas of relative heights and sizes. Other staff members interpreted the project director's objective in a rather different way. Confronted with the request to introduce numbers and letters as preparation for school, some more traditional work sessions were conducted. Children might be asked to count the numbers of beads on a table and to copy out the correct number onto a sheet of paper on which a set of numbers had already been written. However the objective was implemented, its links with assessment and achievement are arguably different from values associated with being at home. Certainly functionalist sociologists such as Parsons have argued that in sharp contrast to how status is achieved in industrial society as a whole, status within the family is ascribed. (4)

Fourthly, and following from the focus on skills introduced by the project director, were the difficulties which staff experienced in combining a homelike routine with specific developmental work. A lack

of certainty was expressed by almost all members of staff in the first year as to the precise nature of the objectives of their work with children or what might be an approved style of working. The fact that the project was termed experimental perhaps excluded the desirability of an approved style, but this certainly did not resolve the problem of staff confidence and uncertainty. These doubts were expresed in a number of ways. Fairly early on in the life of the project they crystallised in a staff meeting. The minutes of that meeting provide the most explicit account of various anxieties :

> No apparent organisation appeared to disorientate members of staff and they could not work fluently without some sort of guidelines....staff appeared to have differing views as to what was required when told children should be working."(5)

On other occasions several staff expressed uncertainties as to whether formal work sessions were appropriate for four year olds, or whether the preparation done at the project would be appreciated by the teachers at school. When children were developing within the guidelines of the normal range, some staff were uncertain as to whether they should try and hurry them along. One staff member resolved this issue by pursuing more academic pursuits only when interest was expressed by the child. Thus she had followed up a child's questions about shapes by drawing and naming some shapes and seeking relevant illustrations in books.

Fifthly, and finally, was the varied purposes which the limited space in the project house served. This was commented on particularly by staff in the house where the project director's office was situated and where the project administrator was based. Some staff in this house felt inhibited in undertaking activities with the children and expressed

concern about their activities impinging on their colleagues' work. Their perception was reinforced by the fact that the downstairs living room served many purposes. It was the largest playspace, the mothers' meeting room and the dining room for the children. The open plan layout downstairs meant that visitors coming to see the project director went into the back of the sitting room in order to go upstairs to the director's office. This made the staff feel that they and the children were on public view and made it harder to create a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere for children.

In the sense that there is no model to which "ordinary" houses conform, then it is not feasible to recreate a home from home. It is also evident that key features of the project distinguished it from the homes of many children. One source of differences lay in the fact that the project director was accountable to the sponsors for the achievements of the project which influenced the decisions he took about the role of the project and the experiences that would be offered to children who attended.

This chapter has described aspects of the work of the project during its first year. The discussion has focussed specifically on issues identified earlier in the report as either unresolved or offering alternative solutions. Of the parties involved in developing the project, the representatives of the sponsoring agencies, the project director, his staff and the parents and children using the project have emerged as separate protagonists with, at least on some issues, differing views and interests.

The discussion here has suggested that during its first year the project was dominated by professional (rather than community) ideals.

Thus choices about how long children would stay at the project and how they would spend their time were largely dictated by the project director and his staff. The choices available to the project director and his staff were nonetheless limited by constraints placed on them by both the sponsoring agencies and, especially, the M.S.C. as the main funding body. Collaboration between the sponsoring agencies, Bedeburgh and Charity X, flourished despite continuing disappointments inflicted by the local authority on the expectations of the charity. Finally the ideal of creating a home from home was found to be inappropriate insofar as the experiences of the children at the project were likely to differ in several identifiable ways from observed experiences in their own homes.

The following chapter will set in context the work of the case study project with reference to other models of care for the under fives in Britain.

CHAPTER 7

"ALTERNATIVES IN DAY CARE"

The sponsors of "Home from Home" regarded it as something of an experimental initiative. The intention of this chapter is to look at some recent trends in provision for the under fives to set in context the work of the case study project.

Where the under fives go

In 1980, when the project opened, it has been estimated that 615 thousand places were available for the under fives in maintained and/or registered playgroups, day nurseries and with childminders. A further 573 thousand children under 5 were attending an educational institution of some kind (1). These summary statistics conceal rather than reveal the considerable variety of day care and/or educational provision for this age group.

Table 1 offers more information about where the under fives spend their time away from home. Two main categories of provision are described - day care provision and educational provision. Twenty years ago the numbers of under fives in the educational sector was more than twice as great as the recorded numbers for those children attending day nurseries, playgroups or childminders. Between 1966 and 1971 the number of what are termed as day care places (which here includes playgroup places) grew considerably and the two sectors have become roughly comparable in terms of numbers of places offered.

TABLE I Education and daycare of children under five (2)

United Kingdom — Thousands and percentages

		1966	1971	1976	1981	1982	1983
CHILDREN UNDER 5 IN SCHOOLS[1] (thousands)							
Public sector schools							
Nursery schools	all day	26	20	20	22	21	20
	part day	9	29	54	67	69	73
Primary schools	all day	220	263	350	281	274	281
	part day	-	38	117	167	180	198
Non-maintained schools	all day	21	19	19	19	20	18
	part day	2	14	12	12	11	13
Special schools	all day	2	2	4	4	4	4
	part day	-	-	1	1	1	1
Total		280	384	576	573	581	608
As a % of all children aged 3 or 4		15.0	20.5	34.5	44.3	42.8	44.7
MAINTAINED OR REGISTERED DAY CARE PLACES[2] (thousands)							
Maintained day nurseries and playgroups		21	23[2]	35	37	38	40
Registered nurseries and playgroups		75	296	401	456	453[3]	468
Registered childminders		32	90	86	110[3]	109	119
Total		128	409	522	603[3]	600[3]	626

Source: taken from Social Trends 1985

1. Pupils aged 2 to 4 at December/January of academic year.
2. Figures for 1966 and 1971 cover England and Wales at end December 1966 and end March 1972 respectively. From 1976 data are at end March except for the Northern Ireland component which is at end December of preceding year.
3. Figure should be treated with caution.

Within the day care sector, the growth of places in registered nurseries and playgroups was most dramatic. The number of registered nursery and playgroup places increased nearly fourfold between 1966 and 1971 and by a third again between 1971 and 1976. Over the whole period 1966-1983, then, places increased from 75,000 to 468,000. The growth in places offered by registered childminders and in maintained day nurseries and playgroups was far less startling. Numbers of places with registered childminders increased four times over the whole period from 1966-1983 but began from a base of 32,000, less than half the places in registered nurseries and playgroups in 1966. The growth of places in maintained day nurseries and playgroups was slower again - from a base of 21,000 in 1966, places nearly doubled to reach 40,000 places by 1983.

Within the educational sector, the largest number of places for the under fives are offered within primary schools. These are for children who will reach their fifth birthday at some point in the school year. Of the categories of more relevance to this study, the numbers of full time places in public sector nursery schools and non-maintained schools have remained roughly equivalent and largely static between 1966 and 1983. Growth in part-time places in these sectors has been more notable, especially in the public sector where part-time places in nursery schools have risen eightfold from 9,000 places in 1966 to 73,000 places in 1966.

What under fives do away from home

The experiences of the under fives in day care places or in nursery schools differs with regard to the amount of time they spend away from home, the activities they are encouraged to engage in, the

qualifications of those who look after them and the premises in which they spend their time. These differences reflect the diverse organisation and administration of care for under fives. Local social services departments, working to D.H.S.S. guidelines, are responsible for the supervision of the various categories of day care placements. Local authority education departments, working to the guidelines of the D.E.S. are responsible primarily for the oversight of nursery schools and classes.

Playgroups, childminders and day nurseries fall under the umbrella of day care placements. A child at playgroup is likely to attend several morning sessions, each lasting two to three hours, a week. The emphasis in the sessions will be to offer opportunities for children to develop skills,both emotional and intellectual, through play. The playgroup leader will have undertaken appropriate training, very often by taking a playgroup course. Parental participation is part of the playgroup movement's methodology and parents typically help at several sessions during a term. A small charge is payable per session. Playgroups are based in all kinds of premises according to what is available in the neighbourhood concerned, but the most common location is a church hall shared with a number of other user groups.

Playgroups are organised for the group care of children aged from two and a half years up to school age. These children are required to have certain skills - to be toilet trained and to be able to communicate their needs to those who look after them, for example. In contrast, childminders care in their own homes for children of all pre-school ages. How a child spends her day at a childminders must vary but the care is characterised by being in another home. The minded children are fitted into the routine of the childminder. The numbers of children

cared for at any time is regulated by the local social services department, normally three under fives at any time including the childminders own children may be cared for. The other aspects of care controlled by the social services are principally concerned with safety standards in the childminder's home. Childminders are not required to have any specific training for the job though there may be training evenings organised locally by a branch of the Childminding Association or the local authority.

Like childminders, day nurseries offer all day care for children of all pre-school ages; but like playgoups the care is group care and the main carers have been trained for the job. Staff in day nurseries normally have the N.N.E.B. qualification and their first concern is to offer good standards of physical care for the children. In their Oxfordshire study, Garland and White describe a typical pattern of activities in a day nursery. The early part of the morning was spent in free play; then came the mid-morning break of milk and biscuits which might be accompanied by a story or singing time; the latter part of the morning was devoted to an organised activity. A rest for the children followed an early lunch and, later in the afternoon, came a walk or play outside. At the end of the day, as staff and children tired, organised activities ceased and the children in turn were collected by their parents (2). The daily experiences of children at day nurseries reflect the philosophy and practice of their particular nursery. As Garland and White also show in their study, in some nurseries the prevailing practice will be to control the children's behaviour and activities. In other nurseries, the children will be perceived as independent beings who need the opportunity to express their ideas and feelings. The criteria employed in the selection of children for day nurseries mean that care is offered primarily to children from homes regarded as

deprived or disadvantaged (3). This factor and the organisational location of day nurseries in social services departments tends to reinforce the principal objective of day nurseries as being to foster the physical well being of children.

In the educational sector other staffing arrangements, clientele and priorities are evident again. Nursery classes and schools are run by nursery teachers with nursery nurses acting as assistants. The children at nursery classes and schools are three and four years of age and will generally attend for part or all of each school day. A part time place at a nursery class, and it is these which are allocated increasingly, offers a two and a half or three hour session a day, a full time place approximates a normal school day. School holidays are observed. There are no criteria applied universally to the selection of children for nursery education. In the state sector places are usually allocated from a waiting list which favours the children of parents who have had the foresight to contact a nursery class or school well in advance of their children reaching their third birthday. This procedure, together with the restricted hours of care, tends to bias allocation of places towards middle class children (4).

The primary objectives of nursery classes and schools are educational:

> "2) Like all provision for small children, public or voluntary, it is essential that nursery schools and classes should provide a secure and caring environment.....
>
> 3) The particular contribution that nursery education makes comes from the planned and regular programme arranged, and the positive but careful intervention of the teachers. These are directed at

> developing children's power of reasoning, their skill in communication and their discrimination of quantity and form. Progress relies on capturing the children's attention and engaging their powers of imagination. In the course of pursuing these aims, the teachers and their assistants provide a bridge between home and compulsory schooling."(5)

In the 1970s and 1980s various schemes have been introduced to bridge the provision offered by local authority social services and education departments respectively. Over the last decade a number of major government reports have acknowledged the importance of linking the caring and educational arms of the pre-school service (6). One approach to implement this ideal has been to establish combined nursery centres. These centres are established jointly by social services and education departments and employ both nursery teachers and nursery nurses. The centres accept pre-school children of any age and offer both full time day care and nursery education for the older children.

The case study project fits uneasily into the four main categories of provision discussed, day nurseries, nursery schools and classes, playgroups and childminding. It exhibits features from each of the various traditions. The age range served is similar to that served by day nurseries and childminders yet its objectives have encompassed the physical care of the day nursery and the educational objectives of nursery classes and schools; there are elements of parental participation that resemble in some ways parental roles in the playgroups; whilst its title and philosophy of a "home from home" echo some aspects of care offered by the childminders.

The case study project sponsors may have been correct in their view of the project as experimental in terms of its precise combination of organisation, location, staffing and philosophy. It might be more accurate, however, to define it as one amongst a number of "experiments" in care for the under fives which were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. An overview of community care projects undertaken in 1984 for the National Children's Bureau, noted the growth of "family centres". The authors' description of 250 such family centres echo elements of the case study project's concerns:

> "-a commitment to working with parents and children rather than the child alone;
> - a commitment to attempting to relieve pressures on the family, often caused by housing, income, legal, or emotional difficulties;
> - a commitment to increasing the self-confidence and self-esteem of all users, and in many an emphasis on improving parenting skills;
> - a variety of services and activities for adults and children, for example, toy library, drop-in, discussion groups, keep-fit, social events, welfare rights advice, playschemes, after-school club;
> - a range of methods of work, offering a flexible combination according to the needs of families and the skills of staff from direct physical care, information and welfare advice, to child management, group work, community work and individual or family therapy;
> - a commitment to user/parent participation, ranging from individual contracts with parents to attendance at case reviews, acting as workers and being part of the user group or management committee;
> - the importance of the local neighbourhood base (which may be an area brought together by a shared bus service);

- attachment to, or links with, a local regional or national organisation." (7)

Not all the family centres were concerned particularly with the day care of young children but their existence illustrates a broader social movement of which the case study project is one example. Under the general umbrella of the term "family centre" the National Children's Bureau researchers pinpoint centres which offer a comprehensive service to a particular group or neighbourhood; it is within this category of provision that the case study project fits. The characteristics of such centres are defined as:

"- a defined building,
- a defined amount of funding for a specified length of time,
- staff (although this is often only one full-time person and some part-time workers),
- a defined set of aims and objectives, usually related to a key target group or form of provision,
- majority of activities take place at the centre,
- a formal steering group or management committee linking the informal system to the formal system."(8)

The National Children's Bureau study was undertaken as part of a government programme called "Helping the Community to Care" which was announced in 1984. The study itself was designed to explore and publicise ways in which self help, mutual aid and/or neighbourhood based initiatives might be fostered. Thus the authors address the issues of what factors encourage or hinder the "success" of individual projects. Their preliminary analysis focusses on similar features to those discussed in the case study - for example, the significance of location, the relations between sponsors, staff and user groups, staffing, the

problems associated with short term funding and acquiring and maintaining suitable premises.

This chapter, drawing on developments preceding and postdating the start of the case study project, has been concerned to place the case study project in the broader setting of care for the under fives and to indicate how the work of the project is topical in current debates about the future of under fives provision.

The next, and concluding, chapter will draw together some implications of the case study for policy, practice and research.

CHAPTER 8

"CONCLUSIONS"

In concluding the thesis, this chapter explains the relevance of a case study approach for exploring collaboration between the voluntary and statutory sectors in implementing social policy, considers the implications of this case study for policy and practice and suggests some issues for further research.

The case study

Research methods are suggested by theoretical perspectives. An important distinction which recurs in the organisational literature is between studies adopting a systems approach, or some variant of this, and those adopting an action frame of reference or some variant. (1) The hallmarks of the first approach are that organisations are assumed to be "composed of a set of inter-dependent parts; organisations have needs for survival; and organisations, as systems, behave and take actions." (2) The links with the assumptions underlying structural-functionalist theories in sociology are obvious. A significant difficulty with this approach is that organisations are reified, they are treated as organisms. The perceptions and intentions of the members of the organisation are overlooked. In contrast, the action frame of reference begins with the actors concerned, "it is equally as valid to suggest that an organisation itself is the outcome of the interaction of motivated people attempting to resolve their own problems.....the environment in which an organisation is located might usefully be regarded as a source of meanings through which members defined their actions and made sense of the actions of others." (3) This approach

does not assume that members of organisations respond in some automatic or unthinking way to the demands and needs of their organisation; rather that within a perceived structure of organisational opportunities and constraints, individuals make decisions about appropriate courses of action. These decisions and actions contribute to the objective reality of the organisation which other actors will experience and, in their turn, react to in a cycle of constructing social reality within the organisation.

The pervasiveness of this theoretical dichotomy between systems and action theories is demonstrated by Weeks. (4) In part of a general review of organisation theory Weeks links theoretical orientations and research strategies. He contrasts studies which adopt a systems perspective (or the variants of universalist, formal, unitary or structural approaches) with those adopting an action frame of reference (or the variants of particularist, informal, pluralist or process approaches). Studies within the former perspectives tend to employ deductive models of explanation and have a deterministic bias. Comparative or functionalist research strategies are adopted. Studies within the latter perspective rely on inductive forms of explanation and are more voluntaristic in their approach to the study of behaviour. Historical or case study methods are more often used. The case study approach attempts to offer a detailed analysis of events in a particular setting. It accommodates the realities of organisational life described by Lindblom as "the science of muddling through". The characteristics of this science in public administration include "continually building out from the current situation, step-by-step and by small degrees." (5)

The assumptions of the action approach, adopted most in intra-organisational studies, have been used in this case study for the

purpose of exploring inter-organisational relationships. The study findings have tested some general propositions about inter-organisational behaviour. Thus one important research question has been under what circumstances would Bedeburgh and Charity X collaborate in the provision of day care and with what results. Initially some clues as to the preconditions of collaboration were sought in studies which viewed organisations as displaying certain needs. Reid's hypothesis , discussed in Chapter 4, suggested that without shared goals, complementary resources and efficient mechanisms for controlling the exchanges involved, Bedeburgh and Charity X could not succeed in mounting a collaborative project. This analysis was found to be flawed in explaining the events described earlier in the thesis. In the partial existence or complete absence of these conditions, Bedeburgh and Charity X nonetheless established the case study project as a joint enterprise. This case study exploration of the intentions and actions of the actors in the different organisations has, then, suggested the possibility of rather less stringent conditions for collaboration. The desire and commitment to collaborate on the part of key members of the organisations assumes rather greater importance.

Some implications

Three main implications for policy and practice will be drawn from the findings of the case study. The first concerns the effects of collaboration on service provision. The findings of this study suggest that the realities of collaboration require the agencies concerned to agree to organisational arrangements which they find, at least initially, unacceptable. Charity X was not satisfied with the decision to staff the project with temporary, M.S.C. funded staff and made its dissatisfaction evident through its requests for Bedeburgh to second

permanent staff to the project. This is an instance where the collaboration was maintained despite evident disagreement.

The durability of the collaboration observed would appear to offer encouragement to policymakers favouring increased partnership between statutory and voluntary sectors in the delivery of welfare services. Less encouraging is the possibility that the desire to achieve successful collaboration may over-ride vigilance about standards of service. To pursue the example given above, Charity X continued to collaborate in establishing the project despite serious reservations that the reliance on temporary staff would put in jeopardy the quality of service offered.

Collaborative working may, of course, lead to enhanced standards of service delivery. What is suggested here is the relevance of further research to examine the ways in which objectives are re-defined and modified when agencies collaborate in the delivery of a service and to explore the implications for service provision.

A second implication of the study findings is the amount of influence wielded by funding bodies, when the sponsors are not the sole funding agencies. The conditions under which funding is given may substantially affect the service which can be offered. In the case study, the main funding body was the Manpower Services Commission, a body concerned with creating employment opportunities. The Commission has no publicly stated policies concerning social welfare provision or the role of the voluntary sector in welfare. Yet it was the conditions laid down by the M.S.C. which governed who could be considered for employment, and how long they could work, in the project. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of recognising the power

wielded by funding agencies and their influence over the way in which services are delivered. The role of the M.S.C. is of importance because of the increasing extent to which the voluntary sector, certainly in parts of the north of England, is heavily reliant on its funding. Further research could usefully focus on the impact of M.S.C. funding on the delivery of welfare services by both statutory and voluntary agencies.

Thirdly, and finally, are the lessons that this case study may have with regard to establishing other initiatives for under fives. Since the completion of this case study, several more projects organised along similar lines, have opened locally in Bedeburgh authority and these have apparently been welcomed by local communities and social services staff alike. The relevance of this particular study for future practice does not lie in evaluating the "success" or otherwise of this project but in what has been observed about the problems encountered in setting up a new project of this type. This study has drawn attention to the importance and potential hazards in selecting an appropriate site; to the conflicts that can arise in agreeing the philosophy of work in a new enterprise and how the philosophy will be implemented in the daily routine and in dealings between staff and children; to the pivotal role of a project director who has to balance the demands of sponsoring agencies, funding bodies, parents and, most importantly, children; and to the practical problems of ensuring adequate resources for equipping and running a centre. At a time when short term funding for new community and social work initiatives appears the norm, then further studies focussing on what difficulties are commonly experienced in the early stages of establishing a new initiative may reap dividends in terms of proposals for anticipating and coping with these.

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15. McMillan M. (1919) "The Nursery School", quoted in Lowndes G.A.N. (1960) MARGARET McMILLAN - THE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION, Museum Press, London, pages 41-42.

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19. Garland C. and White S. (1980) CHILDREN AND DAY NURSERIES, Grant McIntyre, page 101.

20. Smith T. (1980) PARENTS AND PRE-SCHOOL, Grant McIntyre, page 4.

21. Bone M. , "Day Care for Pre-School Children Uses and Preferences", in DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY LOW COST DAY PROVISION FOR THE UNDER FIVES, Papers from a conference at Sunningdale Park, January 1976.

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23. Op. cit. Note 1, page 147.

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27. Op. cit. Note 10, page 112.

28. Op. cit. Note 19, page 33.

29. Op. cit. Note 19, pages 66/7.

30. Op. cit. Note 19, page 93.

31. Wood D., McMahon L and Cranstoun Y. (1980) WORKING WITH UNDER FIVES, Grant McIntyre, see page 168.

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1. This quotation, and others used in this chapter, are drawn from discussions which the researcher had with members of the project staff and with the parents of children attending the project.

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4. See Parsons T. and Bales R.F. (1955) FAMILY SOCIALISATION AND INTERACTION PROCESS, The Free Press, New York.

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3. See discussion in Hughes M et. al. (1980) NURSERIES NOW : A FAIR DEAL FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN, Penguin Harmondsworth, page 86.

4. ibid. page 135.

5. Department of Education and Science, "Nursery Education Current Provision and Policy", in LOW COST DAY CARE PROVISION FOR THE UNDER FIVES, D.H.S.S. Papers from a conference held at the Civil Service College, Sunningdale Park, 1976, 9-10 January, page 13.

6. Central Advisory Council for Education (1967) CHILDREN AND THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (Plowden Report) London H.M.S.O.; Department of Health and Social Security (1974) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ONE-PARENT FAMILIES, (Finer Report), London H.M.S.O.; Department of Health and Social Security (1976) LOW COST DAY PROVISION FOR THE UNDER FIVES, London D.H.S.S.

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2. ibid, page 27.

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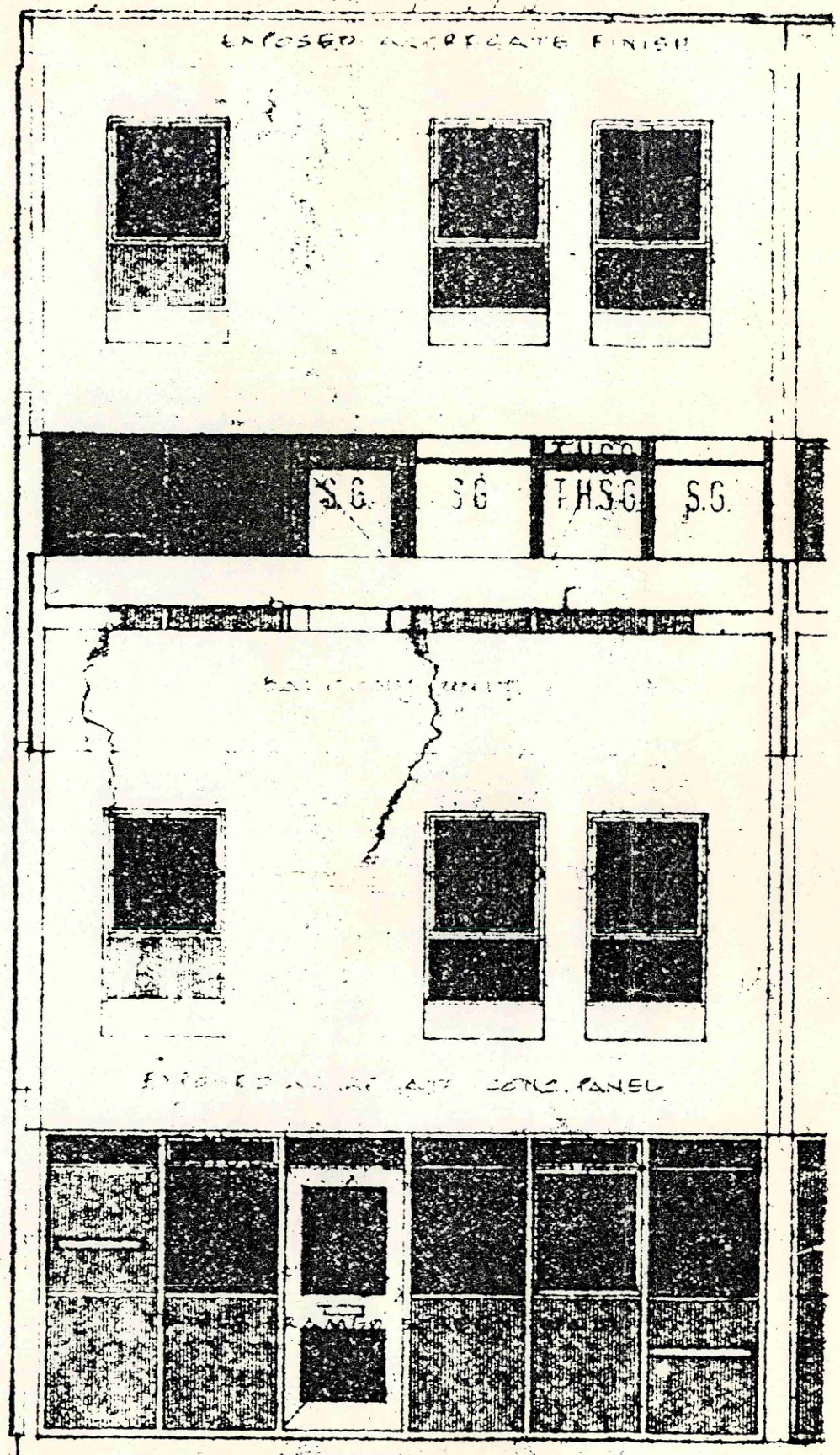
4. Weeks David R. "Organisations Theory - Some Themes and Distinctions" in Salaman G. and Thompson K. ed (1973) PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS, Longman for the Open University Press, pages 375-395.

5. Lindblom Charles E. (1959) "The Science of Muddling Through", PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REVIEW, Volume 19, Number 2, pages 79-88.

APPENDIX

PLAN OF THE PROJECT HOUSES



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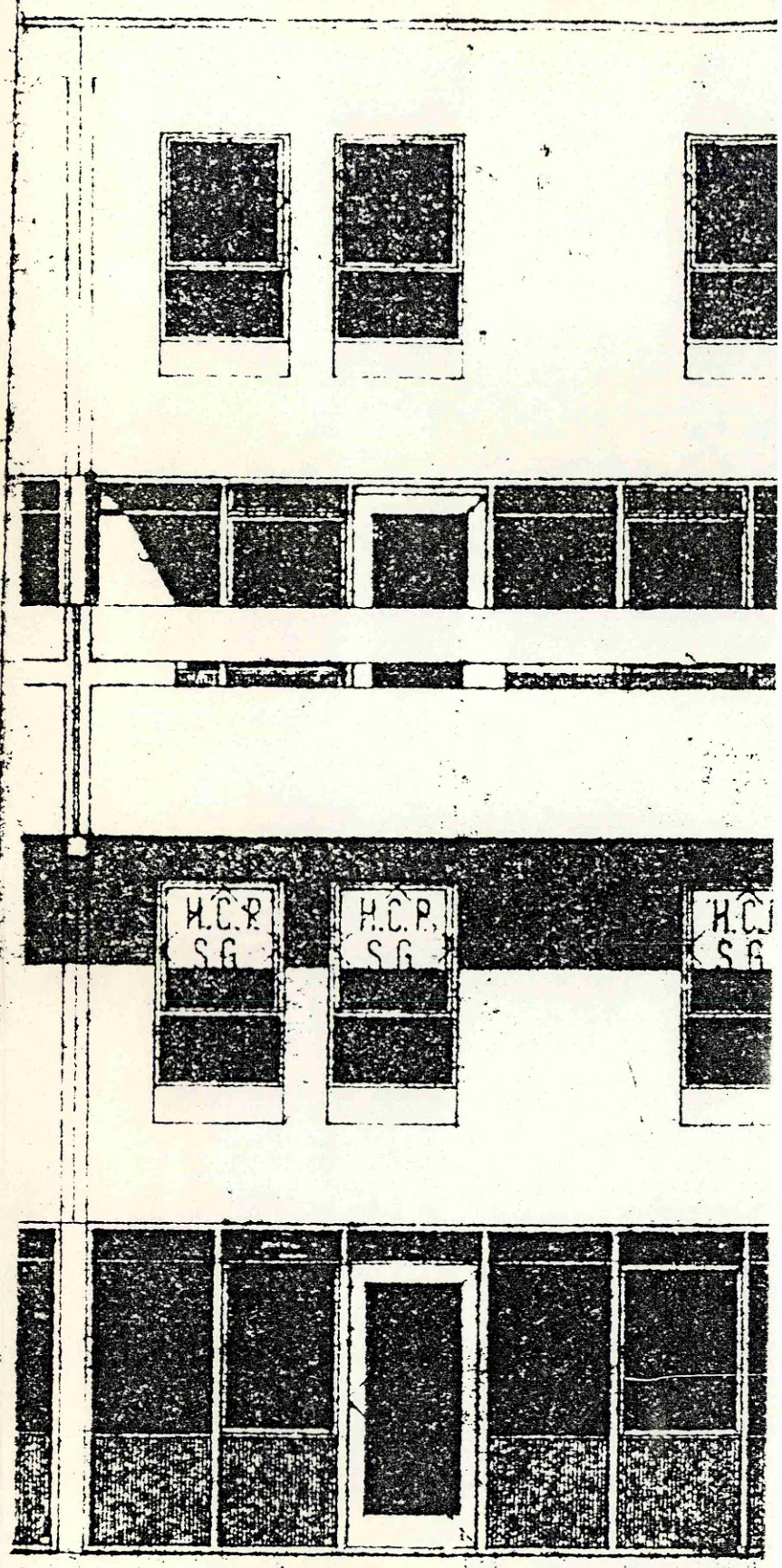

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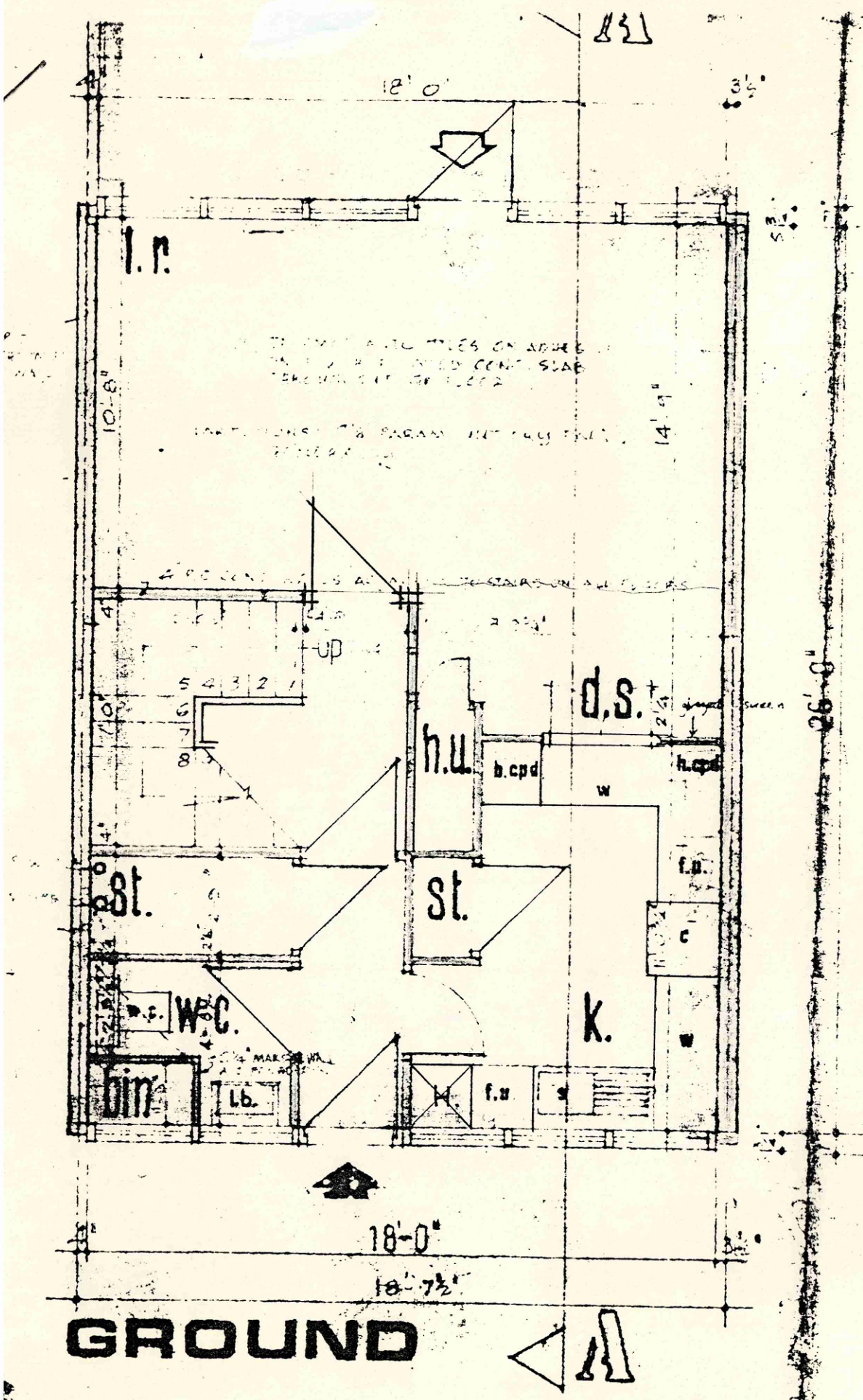

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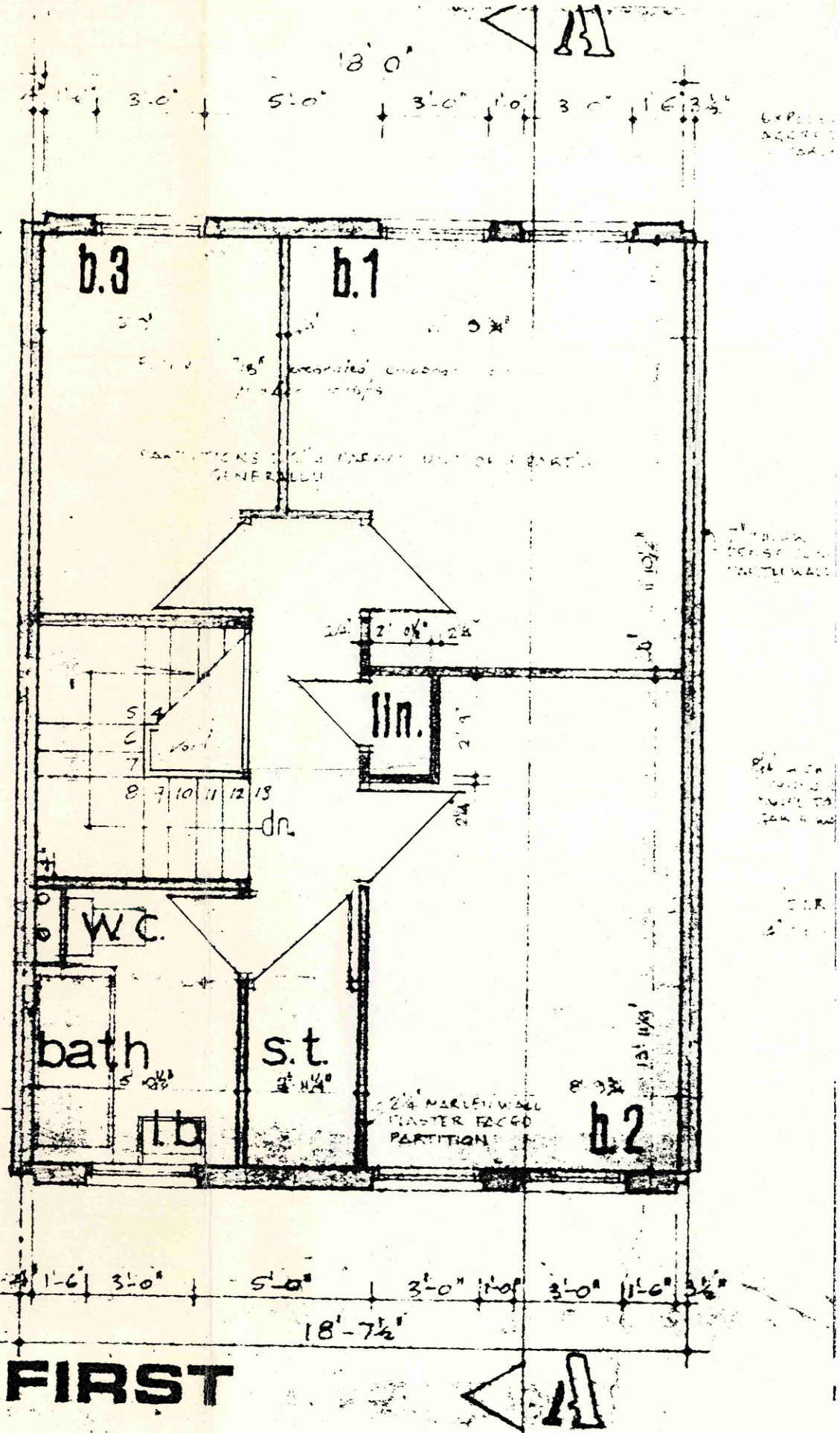

FIRST

TYPE M2